Interview with Josephine Datz

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today is Thursday, June 7, 2012. I'm here with Josephine Datz, who, for here on afterwards, will be known as Jo Datz. That's what you prefer, right?

Datz: Right.

DePue: And we're interviewing Jo because of your experiences as an immigrant to the United States, but I don't even think that today's session will get you to the United States. There's quite a bit to talk about, because you grew up in South Africa—

Datz: Correct.

DePue: —to parents who didn't grow up in South Africa.

Datz: Correct.

DePue: So there's quite a bit of that we need to lay out and understand, and you're going to be able to give us a perspective of what it meant to be a Jew growing up in South Africa during apartheid, and watching what was going on in the

distance in Israel at the same time. That's why I'm excited about this. Why don't you tell us when and where you were born?

Datz: Okay. I was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, on the February 4, 1963.

DePue: Okay, and tell us about your parents.

Datz: My parents are both immigrants to South Africa. On my mother's side, she was born in England, London, England—Ilford/Essex, actually, to be precise.

DePue: Ilford/Essex.

Datz: Essex. My father was born in what was then called Vilna, Lithuania. They both found their ways to South Africa at different times, met and married in 1957, and had two children, two girls. I have an older sister, Sara Caroline, who was born in 1960, and myself.

DePue: Okay. Your father was born in Lithuania. What year was he born? Do you know?

Datz: He was born in 1928.

DePue: When did he come to South Africa?

Datz: He came to South Africa in 1934 with his mother. His father had moved to South Africa before him, I think in 1929, went ahead and then sent for his wife and child. Though he was an only child, there was a daughter, a sister who had died previously. And they went in 1934. So my father, really, to all intents and purposes, only met his father when he was six years old, because he left before; he was too young to remember him.

DePue: Do you know why your grandfather left?

Datz: My grandfather left Lithuania because of Polish anti-Semitism. At the time, Lithuania was controlled by the Poles, and he didn't like what he saw.

DePue: I'm confused, because I thought at that time, after the First World War, the peace treaty created Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia.

Datz: Well, I could be incorrect on that. I think it was—yeah, maybe it was just Lithuanian anti-Semitism. (laughter) What I do know at the time is when my father's parents grew up they were Russian speakers, because it was controlled by Russia. When my father was a little boy he spoke Polish. So I don't know, and it's something one should check, actually, I guess. (laughter) But the common language between my father and his parents was Yiddish.

DePue: Yiddish.

Datz: Yeah. So either way, he didn't like the anti-Semitism he saw around him, and he decided to leave.

DePue: Was your grandfather a veteran of World War I?

Datz: I don't know. I don't know.

DePue: It was such a messy situation at that time in Europe. The First World War was devastating to...

Datz: Right. I do remember my grandmother. My grandfather, who I'm named after—his name was Joseph—died before I was born, but I knew my grandmother, Rosa. She used to talk about the First World War and the hardships of her life, you know. It was a very difficult time.

DePue: Did you hear stories also about some of the anti-Semitic attacks that were going on?

Datz: Yeah, yeah. The story I heard that sort of precipitated my grandfather's move was he came home after he saw a group of Poles or Lithuanians burying a Jew alive, and he said, "Yeah, that's it, we're leaving." And, fortunately, he did leave, because the rest of the family were not so fortunate. He had a brother who was in Palestine who then moved to South Africa because he got malaria in Palestine, and he was advised to go to South Africa for a better climate. So that's why he went to South Africa.

DePue: When did his brother go to Palestine?

Datz: I don't know.

DePue: Was that before World War II, or...?

Datz: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, this was... He had already gone from Palestine to South Africa before my grandfather left in 1929, so I assume it was early on.

DePue: But lots of the family stayed in Lithuania.

Datz: Yes.

DePue: And—

Datz: All the family other than that.

DePue: Well, it's probably a pretty obvious answer, but what happened to them?

Datz: Well, we've subsequently found out there were, as far as we know, two survivors. The rest were all murdered in Ponary Woods. Slightly different pronunciation people give it, but it's woods outside Vilna where the Germans took masses of Jews and just slaughtered them.

DePue: Gunned them down.

Datz: Gunned them down in ditches. Also in Vilna Ghetto, is what we've heard, and we've heard some horrifying stories about what happened to some of them. There was one brother of my grandmother who I think had joined the Red Army, and did survive the war, and lived in Ukraine, somewhere in Kiev, after the war. My grandmother used to write to him whenever possible, sort of through the Red Cross, but it was the Iron Curtain, and they couldn't have open communication. So we assume he had a family and lived there, but we don't know what ever happened and what that side of the family—where they are. There was another brother of my grandfather, Joseph, called Max, who I don't think survived the war, but he had a daughter who survived the war. We only found out five, six, seven years ago that he had a daughter, who turned out to be living in Germany, who had a son in Siberia. A lot of the Jews who'd gone back to Germany are Russians. That's the biggest growth in Jewish population in Germany since the war. She's alive, and she's moved to Germany. As far as we know, she was the one survivor, and there was a brother. All my father's other uncles, aunts, cousins were all murdered.

DePue: Well, from everything we just talked about, your grandfather and your father, your whole family, had great reasons to be leaving Lithuania at that time.

Datz: Absolutely.

DePue: So what's the reason they went to South Africa?

Datz: Well, it was a chance, the fact that my father's father had a brother who'd gone to South Africa, and that's why they... And as my father said a mosquito saved his life, because there's no doubt as a six-year-old—well, he would've been eight, ten when the war broke out—but chances are he would've been killed along with the rest of his family. Had his uncle not gone to Palestine, got malaria, moved to South Africa, he wouldn't have survived. South Africa was purely because there was a connection.

DePue: Is the connection there from Israel or Palestine at that time to South Africa because they're both under the control of the British Empire?

Datz: Yeah, but it doesn't make sense, other than—because, you know, England had nothing to do with Lithuania. I don't know. For some reason, the vast majority of Jews in South Africa are Lithuanians, so there is already a critical mass of Lithuanians. I think this dates back to a period at the turn of the century when one of the Randlords, people who owned goldmines, Alfred Beit, was a supposed—ostensibly a British Jew. B-e-i-t is his name. But, in fact, he was born in Lithuania, and he encouraged emigration from there to South Africa. I think that's probably why; people followed family.

DePue: How big a population did South Africa have of Jews at the time you were growing up?

Datz: Oh, Jews. Well, let's put it this way: at its peak, there were about 120,000 Jews in South Africa. I think when I was there it was probably over 100,000. There was always immigration. The peak was probably turn of the century, and then, again, there was a blip after the war.

DePue: After World War II.

Datz: War II, right. But over the last few years, during apartheid there was emigration, and then as the crime has increased there, there's been more. So it's now—they don't know. I mean, between sixty and eighty thousand Jews.

DePue: Okay, so emigration.

Datz: Emigration out, yeah.

DePue: Yeah, Jews leaving South Africa, okay. Okay.

Datz: Yeah.

DePue: Was your grandfather and your father, what denomination—for lack of a better term—of Jews were they?

Datz: Well, there wasn't denominations that we know today, quite honestly. I mean, worldwide in Jewry there were things going on, with reform being created in Germany in the 1800s. Lithuania would not have known from reform. It would have been Orthodox Jewry or nothing. From what I gather—and Vilna was called the Jerusalem of Europe. I mean, it was a huge center of Jewish life and culture, and a very great hub. I mean, what happened there was absolutely devastating. It was also the home of the Vilna Gaon. It was more rationalist—

DePue: The Vilna...?

Datz: Gaon, G-a-o-n. There are different movements. There was Hassidism came out, and this movement from Vilna was anti that sort of ecstatic type of stuff. From what I gather, they were not particularly religious. They lived in Vilna, which is a city. You know, a lot of Jews grew up in shtetls, little towns in Russia and Poland and Eastern Europe. They did not. They grew up in a city, very westernized, cultured, educated, integrated.

DePue: They would've dressed as the secular population did?

Datz: Absolutely. Very much secular. What level observance, I don't know. Certainly they were not observant when I grew up. Yeah. So nominally Orthodox. When I sometimes went to synagogue with my grandmother, we went to an Orthodox synagogue.

DePue: Okay. So that's the European connection. Where in—

Datz: On my father's side.

DePue: On the father's—

Datz: Right.

DePue: And we'll get to your mother a little bit later here.

Datz: Okay. (laughter)

DePue: Where in South Africa, then, did they settle?

Datz: They settled in Johannesburg area. My father's father had a farm in what was today near Soweto, which is a well-known, I guess, African area. It used to be one of the African communities established under apartheid. The thing is, he was not a farmer. He wasn't much of a farmer, let's put it this way. I think he had milked the cows and sort of things. So it wasn't easy. Apparently my grandmother once got very ill from unpasteurized milk and that sort of thing. It was Johannesburg but rural, farm. My father was sent to a boarding school from a young age. You know, he arrived there not speaking any English, of course. They traveled through Germany. He remembers seeing what we know now as swastikas, and came down, obviously, by boat from on West Africa.

DePue: But he was a very young boy.

Datz: He was a young boy. He was six. But he remembers stuff, and he remembers seeing black faces for the first time.

DePue: When he got to South Africa.

Datz: Well, on the boat trip down. You know, they stopped in various ports along the way, so that was a... And he went to boarding school, a very English style boarding school. He was a resident—what do you call that—a boarder at the boarding school for most of his schooling.

DePue: So your grandfather and grandmother, obviously, and your father come to South Africa. We're going to get into some of the complicated mix that South Africa was and is. But he knew Polish and Yiddish and Russian?

Datz: I don't know that his Russian was... No, he grew up Polish. So they used to speak in Yiddish, I gather. And certainly when I was growing up my father and grandmother used to speak to each other in Yiddish. Her English was okay but very heavily accented. Yiddish is the language of European Jewry. It's a mix of Hebrew, German, Russian, mishmash. It's a wonderful language, very expressive, terrific. You know some of them have made their way into the wider culture, which is always fascinating.

DePue: Like *mensch*. Okay, so here's—

Datz: *Schmear*. (laughter)

DePue: *Schmear*. So here's a question for you: how much Yiddish do you know?

Datz: I mostly know expressions, unfortunately. I wish I was taught more, because I wish I could speak Yiddish more. I took a little class once, and it's not difficult in concept because of Afrikaans and the German thing that I could pick up, how the language works, but it's mostly expressions that I know.

DePue: Well, I'm jumping ahead a little bit here, but what language, then, was spoken in your home when you grew up?

Datz: Oh, English. English. I mean, my father was English-speaking. He grew up there from a young boy. He spoke English.

DePue: And you said he went to English boarding schools.

Datz: Yeah, English-speaking. Now, schooling in South Africa was always segregated between English and Afrikaans. He went to an English-speaking boarding school. And, of course, this was a colony at that point, so this was very much in the English style prep school. This was very English, like we all know with English schools. So he went to that kind of school. Never came out with a plummy accent; he has a South African accent.

DePue: A plummy accent?

Datz: Plummy, very English proper accent. (laughter)

DePue: Okay, I'm probably going to have to do that a few times during this interview.

Datz: That's okay.

DePue: Okay, now, here's your next assignment.

Datz: Yes.

DePue: At the time your father is growing up, and to a certain extent getting into the time you grow up, can you lay out just enough for us to understand the ethnic and the political and the language mix that was and is South Africa, and enough of the history to understand this going forward?

Datz: (laughter) Nothing's simple. I mean, you know, it depends how detailed you want. At the time, South Africa was an English, or British, colony. It had been settled first by the Dutch in the 1600s, the Cape colony, and then the British. The Portuguese also discovered certain areas. But it became a country of conflict from pretty much day one, and more so, of course, when gold and diamonds were discovered. Then it became a really wealthy piece of real estate.

DePue: And that was in the mid-nineteenth century for those?

Datz: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Besides everything else, you not only have a racial conflict between black/white, you have a conflict between English/Afrikaans speakers. I don't know how much detail you want me to go into, but the British controlled the Cape, as the Dutch had before them, and the Dutch descendants became Afrikaners. They spoke a slight variation of Dutch. Over time it developed into Afrikaans. There were also French settlers who came who were called Huguenots. They came later. They controlled the Cape. Then the British came, and were very oppressive of the Afrikaner, of the Dutch. They wouldn't allow them to speak their own language. They wouldn't let them be schooled in their own language. They left the Cape and started what's called the Great Trek into the interior of the country. But then they clashed with the black population, who the only indigenous black population are what we call colloquially the Bushmen, but they're actually Khoi, K-h-o-i, or San, are the Bushmen. They are the only indigenous population of South Africa. The rest of the African population came down from the north into South Africa. There were many wars between the African tribes for power and land. The history of South Africa is the history of conflict over land.

DePue: Well, the one that most Westerners know about is the Zulu tribe.

Datz: The Zulu. Well, the reason they know it is because they were the most powerful tribe at one point. What you had was this coming down from the north of African tribes conflicting with others, and starting—it was called the Mfecane or the Defecane, which was this great upheaval and wars between the African tribes, and the Zulu prevailed, by and large, because they developed a new form of warfare and new weapons, shields. They developed these very big shields. Shaka Zulu—Shaka's the name of one of the kings—they developed a new form of warfare of, as they went into battle, how they protected themselves, or they had a sort of crescent-shape attack, where they would come in like pincers and catch people. The Zulu nation was a very powerful and very proud nation. They were very successful.

DePue: Was their base in the Natal region?

Datz: Natal, yes. And they still are. I mean, that's predominantly Zulu. It has implications later, because South Africa's tribal. There are different tribes. There are fourteen official languages now, African names..

DePue: Fourteen official languages.

Datz: There are, now, post-apartheid fourteen official, including English and Afrikaans. So there are at least twelve African tribes.

DePue: If you're going to be successful today in South Africa, what languages do you speak?

Datz: English. English.

DePue: English. More than Afrikaans?

Datz: More than Afrikaans. Well, because English is the language of the world and business. Afrikaans is the second most popular, most frequently spoken language, which is interesting given that it was the language of Afrikaners only, and the oppressor, apartheid. However, now you have the so-called coloreds—who are called coloreds in South Africa now; it's become an acceptable term—that is mixed race, who are generally black/white mix, predominantly in the Cape, speak Afrikaans. That's their lingua franca.

DePue: And that's not a small percentage of the population, is it?

Datz: No. I don't know what the breakdown is, but—

DePue: And I understand that goes all the way back to the 16 and 1700s, as well?

Datz: From the time whites landed on the... (laughter) There would be—

DePue: That would make sense.

Datz: (laughter) You have the sort of English/Afrikaans thing. You have the Afrikaners moving north clashed with the blacks over land and power. So you had wars. You also had wars between the British and Zulus, and that's a whole 'nother discussion. But yeah, that's the history of South Africa.

DePue: The Afrikaans—that's how you pronounce...?

Datz: Afrikaans, yeah.

DePue: They would be more farmers, more rural?

Datz: Yes. They were very much farmers. I mean, the term—they would call themselves Boers, which was Afrikaans word for farmer, B-o-e-r, Boer. Very much farmers. Very much part of the land. That's where the conflict came in. Then that leads to a whole 'nother area of the apartheid thing was they were competing with blacks. They didn't have any more education or skills than the blacks, and they wanted to protect their job opportunity.

DePue: Okay. I think most Americans' perception of South Africa is we see this monolithic white population, and then maybe we have an understanding there's coloreds there, and then this huge black population.

Datz: Right.

DePue: We miss out on the conflict within the white population itself that's been there.

Datz: Absolutely. Well, and not just the conflict, the fact that it's also very much a melting pot. I mean, you've got the English/Afrikaans, but within the white—there's always been tension and some severe historical strains between English and Afrikaners. I mean, very deep. Very deep. I mean, during the two Anglo-Boer Wars, the British interred Afrikaners in concentration camps. Now, they weren't extermination camps, but they were concentration camps, and many, many people died from disease. So there's deep bitterness there. You've got a lot of immigrants. Over the years you had a huge influx of Portuguese from the surrounding Portuguese colonies—Mozambique, Angola—who—

DePue: White Portuguese?

Datz: White Portuguese, who left when things changed in those countries in the sixties. So there's the second largest Portuguese community in the world lives in South Africa. You've got people from all over the world, so it's a melting pot. And you've got different tribes. Now, of course, post-apartheid you've got blacks from all over Africa there now, from as far north as Ivory Coast and Cameroon, and so it's now—the black community is far more diverse than it used to be. There's some xenophobia there, too, now.

DePue: There a lot of intermarriage between the various old tribal groups of the black population?

Datz: I doubt it. I doubt it. I think tribes generally stuck together.

DePue: Well, I know from knowing a little bit about Gandhi's life and career, there's a sizable Indian population, as well.

Datz: There's a sizable Indian population. There's population from India and from Malaysia. Most of the Malays went to Cape Town. They're called Cape Malays. They're mostly Muslim, moderate—were; it's changing now. Then there were Indians from Asia brought in to work on the sugarcane farms in Natal. So there's a fairly large Indian community, both Hindu and Muslim. I think the majority in Natal—there's a big Indian community in Natal—I think they're mostly Hindu. It's a bit of a melting pot, and people don't—they see black and white. They don't see the... So, good food. Good, interesting food. (laughter)

DePue: In Johannesburg, though, I mean, how does a sizable British population, English population, end up in the heart of South Africa around Johannesburg?

Datz: Gold. Gold was discovered in that area. Diamonds were discovered in the Cape, in Kimberley. You see, if you're looking at a map today, the country is divided into far more provinces than previously. When I grew up there were four provinces. Johannesburg used to be in an area called Witwatersrand, which translates into White Waters Rand, which means it was a reef—it's a band of gold. So Johannesburg is built on gold, on goldmines. You see them

around you. You would sometimes feel earth tremors from that. That's where the center of business developed, because of the gold. Johannesburg is like the New York of South Africa. It's the center of everything: culture, business. The next big city is Cape Town, but it's not... Joburg is where it all happens.

DePue: Where's the capital?

Datz: A-ha! (laughter) Nothing simple in South Africa. South Africa has three capitals. We have a legislative, executive, and judicial, and that hasn't changed since post-apartheid. The legislative capital is in Cape Town, the executive is in Pretoria, and the judicial is in Bloemfontein. Pretoria was the seat of government—it still is, executive government. It was very Afrikaans, of course, in the heyday, and the military base there. Pretoria and Johannesburg are not far apart, and now they've almost merged as one, but they were light years different. Johannesburg was predominantly English-speaking, business, all of that; Pretoria, Afrikaans, government, military. You know, it was night and day. Then Bloemfontein is the capital of what was called the Orange Free State, and—

DePue: Still is.

Datz: It still is, yeah. Now, the Orange Free State was when the Dutch left the Cape in the Great Trek, they established their free state, Orange Free State, Vrystaat, and they controlled that. Even when the British controlled other parts of the country, they controlled the Orange Free State.

DePue: Would there be more people with Afrikaans roots than English roots?

Datz: I don't know what the figures are, quite honestly. I really don't know how they balance out. Is it half and half? Is it more...? I don't know. What mattered in the end was who had the power, and whether there were many Afrikaners or British, they were in control. They created apartheid, but they didn't start from nowhere; they took stuff from the British.

DePue: In the twentieth century, maybe late nineteenth century, when the country's absorbing people from all over the map, were the new arrivals tending to affiliate more on the English side of the equation than the Afrikaans side?

Datz: Yeah, because I think if you're not Afrikaans, you're not Afrikaans, you know. The English is everyone else. But look, when a wave of immigrants came before the war, the Second World War—now, this was British controlled. It was an ally. It was a British ally with the war coming. They were Jewish immigrants who came on boats, and they were met with protests by the sort of right-wing, neo-Nazi, Nazi sympathizers who became the leaders of the Nationalist party, who created apartheid. I don't know how integrated anything was. You know, immigrants stick together. Now, a lot of the influx of immigrants came later. The Portuguese came in the '60s. Around World War II, it would've been English and Afrikaans and a few other immigrants.

DePue: Well, let's—you did a very good job on that. (laughter) Thank you, Jo.

Datz: There's so much to say about the history of South Africa.

DePue: Yeah, so I suspect people listening to this, Wow, I need to read more about this. It's much more complicated than I thought.

Datz: Isn't it always? Isn't it always?

DePue: It is always that way, yeah.

Datz: Yeah.

DePue: So let's weave in your mother's side of the story into this.

Datz: Okay. So my mother was born in England in 1933. She lived there through the Second World War, went through the blitz in England, recalls sleeping in subway stations, and was briefly sent to the countryside which they did with the kids, but that didn't last long, I think.

DePue: Do you know where her family came from, originally?

Datz: Yeah. Her parents came from the Ukraine, Odessa. They came into the United Kingdom through Scotland. I don't know why, but that's how it happened. Their first two sons were born in Scotland, in actual fact, and then there was a son and then my grandmother who were born in England.

DePue: So this would've been late nineteenth century.

Datz: Yeah, sort of turn of the century kind of thing.

DePue: During some of the pogroms.

Datz: Exactly.

DePue: That's why they left?

Datz: Yeah. My grandmother was one of four children. She had three brothers. One was killed in Malta, during the war, is buried there, in fact. She married my mother's father, who—it's interesting; his family came from Poland, and both my mother's grandparents on the father's side were born in England. On my mother's side, they were born in Odessa, in Ukraine. On her father's side—and I just found this out fairly very recently—they were born in England. Her grandfather's father was born in Poland, but her grandmother, who my sister has her second name, was born in England, but from Dutch decent, Sephardic Jews. On two sides we found that they are Dutch names, so they were obviously Jews from Holland, probably from Spain originally, through Holland to England.

DePue: You said Sephardic Jews?

Datz: Sephardic Jews.

DePue: Which means what?

Datz: Sephardic Jews are those Jews—it's S-e-p-h-a-r-d-i-c. There are different categories of Jews. Sephardic Jews are generally the Jews who come from Spain, Portugal, Holland, that sort of area. The Ashkenazi Jews is the Eastern European—Germany—well, Germany's slightly different—Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia. Those are Ashkenazi.

DePue: So all this goes back maybe 1,500 years or so.

Datz: Oh, yeah, you know, from the Diaspora since on, and the expulsion of Spain. But Jews in Spain are considered Sephardic Jews, and Italy, Jews in Holland, that sort of thing. Sometime Jews in the North African, Arab countries, Middle Eastern countries are called Sephardic, but they're actually not. They would be called, I guess, the Levant, the Oriental Jews, rather than Sephardic. They have different customs. There is that on my side, as well. There's the Sephardic element from Holland on my mother's paternal grandmother's side. Then on my father's side, their grandparents had three sons, one of whom was her father. Her grandmother was a redhead and all her three sons were redhead, ginger. There was a fourth son who apparently was killed. He was being pushed in a pram by a nanny. Her grandfather made and lost a lot of fortunes. You know, he was an entrepreneur type, but he made and lost money. So they had a nanny, which sort of a certain level of wealth, and the scaffolding fell on his pram and he was killed. Awful.

DePue: Wow.

Datz: Then the other three sons served in the Royal Air Force during the War, one of whom got badly wounded and burnt in—I think he was flying over Iraq or somewhere in North Africa.

DePue: A pilot in the war.

Datz: Pilot in the Royal Air Force. Yeah, so that's on that side. Then my mother had—her parents had my mother and her sister, who lives in America now. My grandparents, my mother's parents, got divorced at some point, and it was before I was born, so I think it was in the '50s, which was fairly unusual in those days. Then my mother, how she got to South Africa—when she turned twenty-one... Apparently she was in a car accident as an infant and was awarded a hundred pounds that she would come into when she was twenty-one. So with that hundred pounds—

DePue: By the government of England, or...?

Datz: I think it was some sort of settlement from the accident.

DePue: Okay.

Datz: So when she turned twenty-one, she decided to go to South Africa with that hundred pounds. She got a ship to Cape Town. She had a cousin there.

DePue: But why?

Datz: Well, it was a colony. It was an adventure. She had a cousin who was from her—one of her uncles had a child who lived in Cape Town. They still live there. She arrived in, I think, New Year's Day 1954, December 31, New Year's Eve.

DePue: Well, I know you've been doing your homework on this side, especially.

Datz: I have. Yeah, I got some dates. Yeah, so she was there 1954, 1955, living in Cape Town, and decided to go back to England, and was by—went to Johannesburg, but met my father, and stayed. They got married in 1957. And hence—

DePue: And never got back to England again.

Datz: Never got back to England again, no. Never wanted to. But her mother still lived there, and both parents, and her sister left England, too, but she went to Canada and then America.

DePue: Your father's side, you have lots of the relatives who stayed in Europe who died in the Holocaust.

Datz: Mm-hmm.

DePue: Would the same thing be true for most of your mother's immediate relatives?

Datz: Well, no, because they were in England, and fortunately England saw it through. So who knows what might have been, but no.

DePue: This is a bit of an aside, but was it the Sephardic Jewish population more so that were the originators of the Zionist movement?

Datz: No, Ashkenazi. And, in fact, no, Ashkenazi and the German Jews were the—Theodore Herzl—were German. That was...

DePue: Okay, now let's get another layer of background information.

Datz: Okay.

DePue: Let me ask you this first: when your parents got married, what was the climate for Jews at that time?

Datz: In South Africa?

DePue: In South Africa.

Datz: Jews were never persecuted. You know, they had a safe haven. However, they were an insecure group, in many ways. I mean, you've got a group of immigrants from somewhere, whether it was turn of the century or not—and this is part of the Jewish condition. I think wherever Jews have gone, they've left because of persecution. You enter, and you make do, and you go along. America's a different story, and in many ways it's turned out different. It started out not so different. But you came into a society that was racist, that was segregated. You have the trauma of World War II, Holocaust. So Jews got on with it, but it was in an environment of uncertainty very often, which is why Jews very quickly up and left when things got difficult in South Africa. You'd often see the Jews were the ones to leave first, because they never felt secure-secure. But they did fine. You know, they tended to be fairly insular. Yeah, insular in some ways.

DePue: Clannish, to a bit?

Datz: To a bit, I guess, because that's how South Africa operates. You know, groups stuck together. It was part of the zeitgeist. You know, that's what it was.

DePue: But isn't that also part of what it meant to be a Jew? At least if you're an observant Jew?

Datz: I think in many cases, yeah. I guess it's part of that, but it's part of the immigrant thing anyway. You know, when someone comes, Lower East Side, the Jews stuck together. You go where your fellow man is. There was some of that. They stayed a far more traditional community than, say, America did at the same time. You know, it took longer to integrate. But they were white, so they had the privileges of being white, which Chinese and Indians did not. Chinese were considered honorary whites, so they had some rights, more than blacks, not as much as whites, and sort of...

DePue: And how about coloreds?

Datz: Coloreds started out with marginally more rights than blacks. They had a certain level of votes, but that was taken away from them, too. But you've got these sort of stratas of, you know—blacks in the bottom, and so it went.

DePue: Well, we're in this area anyway, so what I wanted you to do next is lay out the apartheid system, and when did it start? Let's put it that way.

Datz: Well, officially apartheid started in 1948 when the Afrikaners took control of the government, okay. In reality—

DePue: Was that whites have the vote at that time?

Datz: Well, let me explain. First of all, apartheid in reality was started under the British. It wasn't called apartheid, but the British certainly didn't give the blacks the vote. The British imposed many of the laws that became entrenched under apartheid. They entrenched them. They made them worse, but they were there. And, for example, with the discovery of gold and diamonds, the British wanted labor on the mines, to work the mines, cheap labor. So they imposed things like hut and poll taxes, to force Africans to leave their huts to go and work on the mines. That was the start of the sort of the labor element of apartheid. There were other laws on the books that were not great, segregationist. So bear in mind before 1948 you've come through two Boer Wars at the turn of the century, you've got Britain—I mean, South Africa was a British colony. It fought in the war, in World War II, in North Africa. The prime minister was Jan Smuts, who I don't know that Americans appreciate, but the English certainly know who he was. He was a very great general in the war. Many South Africans served in North Africa, and died a bit, too. But in 1948 the Afrikaners came to power, and this was their moment. So you have an ideology based on religion, a notion of Manifest Destiny. They felt that they are superior, as white men, as Afrikaners. They had a sort of Manifest Destiny that they were put on this Earth to create a white homeland, and to dominate the black man, who was going to be there to serve. If you look at it from a more economic perspective than just political and social, they wanted job protection from competition of blacks, because they weren't any more educated or skilled. When the British controlled industry in the mines, the blacks and the Afrikaners and the whites were of the same skill level. They didn't—you know, the British looked down on them and thought they're no better. Truly. The Afrikaners felt, we're better, so we're going to reserve certain jobs just for whites. That became the essence of apartheid in an economic sense. So you have job reservation, where certain jobs could only be taken by whites.

DePue: Such as?

Datz: Well, on the mines, for example, blacks could never get a blasting certificate. They could do the hard work of a mine, but they could never progress to the supervisory level, never do the blasting. When you have a blasting certificate—they're the guys who blow up rock—it comes with status. It comes with money. So in industry there were these reservations. They said blacks will never be—and they will be educated only to serve. The education was unequal, so that blacks—their feeling is they will only be good for gardeners and waiters, and that's what the education system was geared towards. It permeated every aspect of society. Then you add this religious notion of superiority, and then they start—you can't marry whites, you can't live with whites. You've got to live in certain areas. It permeated every aspect of society, from who you could date, who you could marry, who you could whatever, and where people could live, so you had segregated living, and you had black areas and white areas. The blacks were relegated to rural areas,

generally, homelands, but that's a whole 'nother dimension, but certain areas. Blacks could only come into the city and work if they had a pass.

DePue: This was a much more—what you've described, the apartheid system, was very racial, but it didn't make a distinction between Afrikaans and English or Portuguese or any other group.

Datz: No, interestingly. It was absolutely black/white. That is interesting, because the hatred of the Afrikaans to the English, you would've thought they would've oppressed the English. It wasn't. It was purely racial. I think that's because of the competition that they faced from the blacks. The blacks were, by far, the majority of the population. Still are. I think probably they realized they needed the English. The English had the business and the infrastructure and. So it didn't become…

DePue: Did the English still kind of look down their noses at the Afrikaans?

Datz: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Very separate. There was also strains of anti-Semitism. I used to hear it. All these quaint notions of Jews. I'll never forget once I went down to Durban, Natal on a train with a friend, and there was mostly Afrikaners on it, and they found out we were Jewish or something, and they said, "Oh, can we touch you? You know, it's lucky to touch a Jew." That sort of thing. It would range from you're the people of the Book, with admiration, to outright dislike. It depended how far rightwing they were. But the government of the day—and I'm talking this First Nationalist Party government of 1948—were Nazi sympathizers. You know, Nazi racial purity laws appealed to them.

DePue: But they had—

Datz: It wasn't just a case of my enemy's enemy is my friend. I mean, obviously England and Germany are opposite sides. The Afrikaners hated the English, so therefore they liked Germany. They liked a lot of the ideology. You know, they liked it.

DePue: But you just said there were a lot of South Africans who fought in North Africa with the British.

Datz: Oh, they did, because it was British. They had to, you know. Well, it was probably mostly English. I don't know how many Afrikaners fought. I don't know if they were drafted. I mean, it would be an interesting thing to look up how many Afrikaners fought in the... And I'm sure they were. Oh, I'm sure they were.

DePue: Did the political parties within the white community at that time basically follow the old ethnic breakdown, as well, so the Afrikaans had one political party and the English a different party?

Datz: Yeah. Yes. And the opposition was more English, and one very wonderful Jewish woman, Helen Suzman, was a stalwart—

DePue: What was her first name?

Datz: Helen Suzman was a very well-known woman in the opposition, liberal party—it's changed names a few times—who really fought apartheid, but within the constrictions of the political legal system, when those were the options. You either do it within the system, or you do it without the system, and that's when you have ANC in exile, terrorism, da-da-da-da.

DePue: Okay. That took a little bit of time, too, but I think it's also important to understand. This is quite a complicated mix you were growing up in.

Datz: Absolutely. Look, when I grew up it was apartheid. These were the dark days of apartheid. This was not coming to the end. This was 1963 I was born; apartheid was implemented in 1948. And it was entrenched. It didn't all happen at once, but over the years it got darker and darker. So 1956, I think, there was further crackdown on the Constitution. I think at that point coloreds could vote, but the right to vote was taken away from them. More and more rights were taken away in the '50s. I'd need to review my dates. Nineteen sixty was the Sharpeville massacre where the blacks were protesting. At first only certain people had to carry passes, and then I think they wanted to expand it to more people, and there were protests, peaceful protests. The government police came in and mowed people down. That was one of those turning points. On a personal level—you want to talk about my growing up there.

DePue: Oh, absolutely. We're just about ready to get to that.

Datz: Well, you know, so I grew up in a white family in South Africa. I was very fortunate, because I was white. We had an African maid, sometimes two, who lived—one would live on the property. This was the normal thing, you know. There was a maids' quarters. Maids worked. For people who didn't like apartheid—and I grew up in a household that was vehemently opposed to it, very aware of what was happening. I had a mother who was very active in the anti-apartheid movement, so one was aware of it. And yet, you know, like in the South here, people lived and grew up and had connections with blacks, but it was at a master/servant relationship. Even if you opposed it, you still were providing employment. It's strange there, because Africans were not terribly skilled, by virtue of their education, so there weren't many options open to them. Domestic help was a big form of employment. If we hired one maid, for example, we were supporting ten other people in her family, and likewise with a gardener and whatever. You sort of ended up being responsible. It set up, unfortunately, a terribly paternalistic type of environment, which is very much ingrained in a lot of Africa. That's another discussion. It's not a good thing, I don't believe, but it's what it was. If the maid's home in the rural areas, the

wind blew off the roof in her house, you were expected as the boss, as the employer, to help pay for it and fix it, and people did. So it's created the sort of paternalistic environment. I went to an English-speaking school, so not only were black/white schools different, but English/Afrikaans were segregated. The Afrikaans children went to Afrikaans schools; English children went to English schools. I learned Afrikaans as a second language.

DePue: In your English school?

Datz: In my English school. Johannesburg was an English-speaking city, so I could go pretty much most of my days without ever having to speak Afrikaans, so my Afrikaans is not good. (laughter)

DePue: What was your father's occupation?

Datz: He was a doctor. He was a hematologist, pathologist.

DePue: Was he educated in South Africa?

Datz: Yeah, from the age of six. He went to, you know, the boarding school. It's a good school. Then went on to university, to one of the top universities in South Africa, which I went to, as well. He went to medical school, and he became a doctor, and set up his own laboratory with partners. He was busy most of my life being a doctor.

DePue: How about your mother? Did she work?

Datz: She worked in various things. Because she left England at the age of twenty-one, she hadn't had a formal post-high school education, but she went to university later in life, when she was already married. She went back and got a BA, and then did a graduate degree in human resources. She was always involved in—and then went into labor relations, and a lot of anti-apartheid activity in different venues. She was a member of the Black Sash, which was a woman's organization that was formed in the '50s to—the Black Sash being they literally wore a black sash across their chest to denote the death of the Constitution in the 1950s, when they started taking rights away from people. These women would meet. They would protest. They would protest and, you know... And then as the laws, they cracked down on public protest over the years, to the extent that I remember certainly when I was a child the government had cracked down that you couldn't have public meetings, and a meeting was two or more people or something. You would have these very brave women standing on roadside corners, one woman with a black sash and a sign, silent protest because they couldn't do this, that, and the other, but they would do it. She got involved in African theater. I mean, everything, every aspect of life in South Africa was political, was controlled. Because you couldn't have integrated audiences in movies and theaters and everything, they started a theater company with some Africans, and it was a wonderful—put on productions. I remember going to some where they integrated the

audience and hoped that the police wouldn't raid them. You know, it was that sort of thing. And, in fact, they were successful. They got tours in Japan and the States and things like that. But everything was political. Everything was political. I remember—just an anecdote, if you want one—my mother wasn't scared to stand up and speak out. We were once in a car. It was my mother, my sister, myself, and a friend. We were driving to a shopping mall or something. We're stopped at the traffic light. There were some white men forcing a black man into a car. Clearly probably security policy, you know. She started hooting and saying, "What are you doing? What are you doing?" You know, "Stop that, stop that." They came up to us and said, "Mind your own business. This is police business." And she wouldn't. She kept on at them, and swore at them, (laughter). One or two other people in the traffic stood up with her. But I'll never forget this one ugly woman came up to the car window and screamed at my mother's face and said, "I hope when the revolution comes your children are murdered." You know, it was this kind of... So unfortunately they pushed the guy in the car, and who knows what happened to him.

DePue: How old were you?

Datz: I'd say I was about eight. Vivid, vivid. I sometimes think about that woman now, you know, the new South Africa, what ever happened to her. But then apartheid goes on, and you live in this very bizarre place. They had a lot of friends who left the country in the '60s. Many emigrated, left. Some had to go underground. Some were imprisoned in the same prison that Gandhi was kept. And they stayed. They talked about leaving, but they never did.

DePue: They, in this case, was—

Datz: My parents.

DePue: Okay.

Datz: My parents had friends who either took a different path or decided that, you know—who were banned. There was a concept in South Africa of a banned person, where if you were banned—some were imprisoned, but some banned—you were subject to house arrest, and you couldn't leave your house. You couldn't leave with certain people. You couldn't be quoted. You couldn't be... I know that our phones were tapped at times. I mean, you could hear it. My parents never crossed the line to illegal activity, and that was a choice you made. You either do what you can within this terrible system, or you've got to do something else. You either leave, or you do some sort of activity that's illegal. They kept it within the bounds.

DePue: But your mother looked at having a maid and having other black servants as a way to help the blacks?

Datz: Yeah, first of all, it's what it was, but it also—one likes to maybe—it's just a thing one says. You know, you say, "Oh, you know, I'm helping." But the reality is you are. I mean, you are. You take a job away from—you don't hire a maid or whatever, that's ten people who are not going to eat. Your obligation, in my view, is you treat them well, and you treat them fairly. It doesn't mean you don't hire them. To me, that's not a protest.

And it was a good life. We lived in a lovely home, in a nice neighborhood, with domestic help. I didn't want for anything.

DePue: Your mother grew up in a very class-conscious society in England.

Datz: I know.

DePue: What class—

Datz: Which is why she hates England. She's got no time for England.

DePue: Ah.

Datz: Yeah, she's very much—

DePue: Would she have been considered the middle class when she was growing up?

Datz: —scorn for England. Well, I don't know. I mean, her mother was Cockney, very much working class, Jewish immigrant. She was a school-going... Yeah, I'd say middle class. Yeah. But she had scorn for English class system, and to this day, and she doesn't feel English at all. But no, she never had any time for...

DePue: Does she identify herself as a South African or as a Jew or both?

Datz: Both. English, South African, and Jew, because she was all those things. There's a point where she's lived there much longer than she ever lived in England. She lived in England for twenty-one years. But also, the thing you've got to understand about South Africa, and all these—I mean, one can talk about only the horrors of apartheid, and there were many. But it's also a wonderful country. I mean, it has a complexity. The people are good and kind, in this strange dichotomy. The blacks are good people. I mean, this isn't Uncle Tom; I mean, (laughter) there's good and there's bad. But there's something about the people. The country is beautiful. The climate is gorgeous. You know, it keeps you there, and it just has this very dark element to it.

DePue: Well, some people end up in places like Illinois. (laughter) How about your father's clientele? Who were his customers?

Datz: Well, his clientele was blood. (laughter) He only saw people's blood. He was a hematologist, so whoever's blood he got, he looked at. It was nonracial, you

know. They were a fairly successful laboratory, and he did the blood element, but they covered all the aspects of pathology, except postmortems. That was usually done by the State. So they would all be sent samples from, you know...

DePue: You mentioned that Johannesburg is very much an English city, Pretoria is Afrikaans, but would each of these cities have large black neighborhoods and colored neighborhoods?

Datz: Not a lot of coloreds. Really, most of the coloreds were in the Cape. Neighborhoods, eh, not really. I mean, if you talk about the cities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, the blacks would be pushed way out, way out into the periphery. So—

DePue: So quite unlike the experience in the United States, in the big cities.

Datz: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, they would not be allowed to live in the cities. So the only people who were blacks living in cities were if they were domestic servants working and living in homes or buildings that required security details, and they had to have a special permission. I mean, if you were an African and you got a—you had to have a passbook. You had to carry it with you at all times, and a policeman could stop you at any time to check your passbook, and it would say are you legal to be here. I mean, this is what happened. This is probably what happened to that guy who was being pushed into a car. If an African got what was called Section 1C rights, they had the right to live and work in Johannesburg or whatever. That was gold. That was gold. That meant they could live and work without being harassed. Otherwise, they had no right to be in the city. Or they were relegated to townships, they were called, around the cities. Soweto was one of the biggest townships, Alexandria, and they sort of dot the periphery of these big cities. That's where blacks lived. They were poor, and they generally lack services, you know. They've changed. Over the years some of them became very middle class, very upper class. Now you wouldn't know. You tour around Soweto, it looks like a suburb of Johannesburg. But many of them were very deprived, and some of them still are.

DePue: They rely on public transportation if they had to move around?

Datz: Yeah. Very few owned cars. Buses—and buses were segregated, of course. Trains were segregated.

DePue: You said you had one sister, an older sister?

Datz: Yeah.

DePue: Okay, tell us a little bit about her.

Datz: My sister is—

DePue: Her name?

Datz: Sara, S-a-r-a, Sara Caroline.

DePue: I don't know what we asked you what your maiden name—

Datz: My maiden name is Gon, G-o-n.

DePue: G-o-n.

Datz: Yeah. Interesting, eh? (laughter)

DePue: It doesn't sound very Jewish.

Datz: It doesn't sound Jewish. Well, we think it was either Gan, G-a-n, which means garden in Hebrew—Gan Eden, Garden of Eden—or Gaon, G-a-o-n. Now, I mentioned earlier the Vilna Gaon. There was a prominent, very prominent... That's credentials, if we're related to him, a very renowned scholar, Vilna Gaon. So we think it might be Gaon. (laughter) But it was changed as they moved, you know, as people came here and their names were changed. So it wasn't shortened from anything. You know, it wasn't Gonanofsky or something. It was Gaon or Gan, but I was Gon.

DePue: And your sister?

Datz: Sara Caroline Gon. Caroline was my mother's grandmother, and Sara was, I think, one of my—I think was my father's grandmother. She was born in 1960. She studied to become a lawyer. She was a labor lawyer and practiced that for many years. Then she left the law and became a—what do you call it—the executive director of the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra. She's done a lot of different things. At the moment she's working for the Helen Suzman Foundation, actually, which is a foundation to promote liberal democracy.

DePue: Still in Johannesburg?

Datz: Still in Johannesburg. She's married to Robert Weiss, as you would say Weiss here, W-e-i-s-s. His parents are both German. That's another story. She has two sons, Joshua and Alex.

DePue: German...?

Datz: German, German Jew, German Jews. His father has a very interesting story. He was interviewed by Steven Spielberg's Holocaust project. He was from—oh, it's just gone out of my head—city in Germany... Dresden. He actually receives reparations. He was cycling in Europe as a teenager, young man, and got word, "Keep cycling, keep going," and he did. He ended up in South Africa. But his family were all killed. So that's my sister, yeah.

DePue: You already mentioned that the family wasn't very religious. They weren't observant Jews?

Datz: No.

DePue: Were you exposed to the religion at all, then?

Datz: Yeah. My parents were not particularly religious, certainly very much identifying as Jews. You know, culturally, socially we were Jewish, and identified as such. We weren't particularly part of a very insular Jewish community. My father's an atheist, and I think certainly the Holocaust experience confirmed that for him, so he had absolutely no interest in any of the religious trappings. My mother, sort of marginally more so. We certainly didn't keep a kosher home. But we observed the holidays, usually with other people, because of other people. I used to go to synagogue sometimes with my grandmother, my father's mother, Rosa. When we went, we went Orthodox, because that's what her tradition was. We used to attend the great synagogue in Johannesburg. It was a lovely building. But really, no. Then my parents at one point felt we weren't getting enough Jewish education, a Jewish—so they sent my sister and I to a Jewish day school for three years.

DePue: That was at grade school level?

Datz: It's a private school, grade school level. We learned Hebrew, Jewish culture—you know, like a Catholic school would be here. And that lasted three years, and...

DePue: (laughter) You roll your eyes.

Datz: Yeah, they were not happy years. It wasn't a good experience. Then after that we went to public schools.

DePue: What was it that made it not a happy experience for you?

Datz: I don't know. I don't know. You know, I was young. My parents put it down to too competitive environment. I don't know. I mean, I don't know, other than I wasn't enjoying it.

DePue: Even at the grade school level, all these Jewish kids were competing with each other?

Datz: Competitive with each other. (laughter) That's what they think. You know, I don't know. As I've grown older, I felt—and I don't know whether I absorbed this from someone else, came to this conclusion—I don't know like those sort of exclusive schools. I think it's important to meet other people and get to know other people. It was more insularity that I wasn't interested in.

DePue: But having said that, you went to public schools, but this was very definitely a—

Datz: White.

DePue: —segregated—

DePue: Segregated, white, English school. Bear in mind, by the way, when I was at the Jewish day school at home, after we got off the bus I'd have to walk a fair distance home, and we walked past an Afrikaans public school. They used to call us names, and "bloody Jew," and all that sort of stuff. There was a horrible little kid on our road who used to confront me often as a Jew, and he was really a nasty piece of work. So that peppered my childhood. I was very aware of being Jewish. You know, I'm a product of my time, and my family's experience, and my time in history, as we all are. I wasn't religious, but I was Jewish, and I felt it very keenly. And, unfortunately, anti-Semitism does that, too. People are often Jewish because of anti-Semitism makes them Jewish. What we have now in America is you choose. You can choose to be Jewish. This is an amazing time in history. There's never been a time in history where Jews could choose. You were Jewish because we hate you and we say so. That's what made you Jewish. You didn't have the choice, because you could never integrate. You could never be this, that, or the other, so you were Jewish. Really, it's an amazing moment in time. I didn't grow up in that. I grew up in a time that I was made very aware that I was Jewish.

DePue: And you sound—

Datz: In a good way and in a bad way, and in a way that there was anti-Semitism and I experienced it. There's no doubt, and you sort of took it for granted. But then my public school experience was white, but it was Christian, Jewish. It was mixed, but only mixed to that extent.

DePue: Was religion an aspect of the education?

Datz: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I mean first of all, the education—while I think I got a good education—was very ideological. The government controlled the textbooks. So you read a history book in South Africa in my day, you would roll your eyes in disbelief. I mean, there were statements like "Indians make good waiters," you know, and full of racist, horrible stuff.

:DePue: Otherwise, the many things that you told me about, would that have been part of your history education growing up?

Datz: Oh, yeah.

DePue: Or did you learn that afterward?

Datz: Oh, no. I mean, they inculcate apartheid in the kids at a very young age, absolutely. Fortunately, I was from a home that knew what was going on and was aware and didn't accept this. Then I was sometimes called names at school by other little kids, because obviously I made my opinions known, and they could tell who I was, and I was called ugly things.

DePue: They knew—you're talking about in middle school now.

Datz: Yeah, middle school and high school.

DePue: Was it called middle school?

Datz: No, it's called primary school and high school.

DePue: So that's very English, too.

Datz: Very English. So you had a combination of very English type of schooling system. I mean, we used to read books about England with red postboxes and snow, and it was bizarre, when you think about it.

DePue: Did you have to memorize all the list of the names of the kings and queens of England?

Datz: (laughter) No, I never did. Maybe, when it was part of the colony they did. But I mean we had this heritage of English education from a colony, added in this Afrikaans nationalist Manifest Destiny, religious extremist view in the textbooks. I mean, they were like extreme Baptists. They were very much that sort of thing, very rigid. They indoctrinated a big generation of kids.

DePue: Would there have been any thought at the time that the Afrikaans and the English schools should integrate?

Datz: Not in my day. No, not in my day. There was state religion, of course. So, I mean, everything was religious. It wasn't...

DePue: What was the state religion?

Datz: Well, it was—what do they call it? National... Oh, man. Well, the Dutch Reformed Church was the church of the Afrikaner Nationalists, and that gave the sort of religious legitimacy to apartheid. So they pushed that. This wasn't America, so you had Anglicans and Protestants and Catholics, and Jews and Hindus and Muslims. No one cared much about us. But we learned in school… Every day we said the Lord's Prayer. I knew all the Christmas carols. I mean, it was Christian-based education.

DePue: Was it Anglican Christian you're getting, or Dutch Reformed Christian?

Datz: Probably a bit of both because you still had that English—

DePue: But you're going to an English school.

Datz: Yeah. So it would be some of the English... Well, the Lord's Prayer and all that, it was in English, and English Christmas carols, so that's the English element. The religious Dutch Reformed was the propaganda part, but every day—never mind no prayer in school—we had prayer.

DePue: When you walked by the Afrikaans kids and they were taunting you, though, were they taunting you in English—

Datz: Yes.

DePue: —or in Afrikaans?

Datz: In English, because they knew I was English. (laughter)

DePue: And they could speak both.

Datz: Yeah. Certainly if they grew up in Johannesburg they had to speak English more than I had to speak Afrikaans.

DePue: How would we in the United States today understand the Dutch Reformed Church from a denominational sense?

Datz: Calvinist, Baptist type. Rigid, strict, you know. Didn't like alcohol and dancing. You couldn't dance—

DePue: So they're from the Calvinist tradition.

Datz: Calvinist tradition, which is—I guess Dutch, German comes from that area.

DePue: Yeah, and many of the Calvinists in England ended up in the United States,

Datz: Yeah, it's interesting.

DePue: —you were getting the Anglicized—

Datz: Version of them.

DePue: Yeah, okay.

Datz: Well, and certainly from the English perspective, when <u>for the</u> English controlled it was Anglican, Church of England, and so that's why Catholics are the minority, I think, in that denomination. It was Anglican and Church of England, and then it was Dutch Reformed.

DePue: Did you have any activities like music or dance or things like that that you were involved in?

Datz: Yeah, you know, the usual thing that kids here would do, I guess. I took piano lessons, dropped piano lessons, took piano lessons, dropped piano, you know. I did dance for quite a while, off and on. My sister learned guitar. You know, we did the sort of lessons that kids do. We don't have summer camp concept like here, because our summers weren't that long. We had a year-round, more balanced calendar. So summer was three, four weeks, and, you know... We took vacations. We were fortunate to take vacations.

DePue: Does that mean you were going to school most of the year?

Datz: No, it means the year's balanced more appropriately than it is here, so that you divide the year into four quarters, instead of this excessively long summer that's based on farming, and nobody here is farming, and then the kids—you know, it's this strange year.

DePue: Well, there's a few farms, you drive outside of Springfield. (laughter)

Datz: Well, most of the kids here are not farming, I can tell you.

DePue: I just had to give you a hard time.

Datz: I know. (laughter) But we traveled. We were fortunate. My parents took us places, and to game reserves, and we went to beaches, and...

DePue: Within South Africa.

Datz: Within South Africa. When I was older my father took us overseas for the first time when I was thirteen. We did a sort of "if it's Tuesday it must be Belgium" trip around Europe and Israel. When I was a student I did my own traveling overseas.

DePue: Okay. What was the name of the junior high you went to?

Datz: You mean primary school, or high school?

DePue: Primary school.

Datz: Primary school. You mean after the Jewish...? First grade I went to a neighborhood school, which was not Jewish, was called Parkview Junior. Then I went to King David, which was the Jewish school. Then I went to Greenside Primary and Greenside High School. And, in fact, my sister's two sons went, and one is still at Greenside High. It's very different now, of course. It's a new South Africa, quite, quite, quite different. It's wonderful to see.

DePue: Where both even the Afrikaans and the English kids are sitting in the same classroom, or...?

Datz: Oh, English, Afrikaans, black, every permutation, yeah. Most of my sister's sons' friends are not white.

DePue: In high school, then, did you get involved with extracurricular activities?

Datz: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think it was the same sort of stuff—dancing, and tennis. You did sports in school. If you're a white kid, your schools were nice. They were funded. Mine was has nice fields. We had track and swimming and all those good stuff. If you were a black kid, you didn't get much.

DePue: If you were on—I don't know what the soccer—they probably call it football—

Datz: Football. It's funny, that's political, too. In South Africa, the blacks played football, soccer—that was their passion—the whites, cricket and rugby. Cricket was the English sport, and rugby was the Afrikaans sport.

DePue: Well, I was going to ask you if you had a cricket team in your high school.

Datz: Oh, yeah. We had cricket. We had rugby. Rugby was only played at high school level.

DePue: Did you play Afrikaans teams in rugby?

Datz: Yes, they did. At the high school level, if you got to a level of competition, they would travel to some of the Afrikaans schools, absolutely.

DePue: That might be kind of an interesting experience, going to that.

Datz: It was. It was. For some of us kids, it was the first time we really—you know, when we would have athletic meets with some of these schools, that's when you met other Afrikaans schools from other parts of the country. I mean, a whole different culture.

DePue: Any tensions when you did that, when—

Datz: I think as a kid you just say, "Oh, they're Afrikaans. It's just different." I didn't think it'd lead to that sort of... Maybe. I wasn't on the rugby team, I can tell you that.

DePue: What struck you about being different, their differences culturally?

Datz: Oh, vast. I mean, they lived in different areas, so you're already outside Johannesburg more. Different language, different worldview. I mean, it was different, because you'd never had anything to do with them before. It just depended. But yeah, so sports was played in school. You had intramurals. You don't have the system here where it's weekends and nights. So we used to

play sports. I played field hockey and netball, which is an English sort of version of basketball, track—we used to call it running. (laughter)

DePue: Because that's what you're doing.

Datz: That's what you're doing. And swimming. It was very English, in many ways. It really was. It's strange, so strange.

DePue: You traveled around a little bit in South Africa, as well. I think another perception the Americans have is it's a small country.

Datz: No, it's not a small country. If you go from Johannesburg to Cape Town, it's a thousand miles. It's sort of—

DePue: And Johannesburg. Okay, then you're probably another 300 miles to the border from there?

Datz: Yeah, well, we used kilometers. (laughter) So—

DePue: Yeah. But that's not very English.

Datz: I mean, the thousand miles—well, but the English did change over, unlike America, who never did. We went metric. I think it's sort of the size of the United States west of the Mississippi—east of the Mississippi. I don't know, whatever it is. But it's big, it's vast.

DePue: Okay. Did you work in high school, have a job?

Datz: No. I think I only did when I was in university. I did various things. You see, the sort of jobs I would have, and that high school students have here, were taken by blacks, and it was their job. You know, for me to go and do whatever holiday job I would get, it wasn't an option, because there was a black in that position, so you didn't.

DePue: But you didn't go to camps, either.

Datz: No, I did one year to some—a Zionist camp, Habonim. It was a Zionist Jewish camp, and I didn't like it at all. I was miserable, because it was very cliquish. I wasn't part of that community, really. I didn't know these people. I didn't fit it. I didn't like it at all. But the Jewish community in South Africa is very Zionist, very supportive of Israel, one of the largest Zionist communities after America. A lot of South African Jews moved to Israel. A lot went to fight for Israel's independence. My father, I know, signed up in 1967 to go fight in the Six-Day War. He didn't end up going, but he would have. So it's a very Zionist community, very supportive of Israel.

DePue: I wanted to ask you some more about that, but one more question about your high school years. Your academic interests?

Datz: What do you mean by interests?

DePue: Well, what were your favorite subjects?

Datz: Or post-high... Oh, well, my favorite—oh, history and English. I was not very good at the sciences. I was okay. Math and sciences are my—

DePue: So you weren't going to be following your father's footsteps.

Datz: No. It's funny because when you matriculate you choose a certain route, the sciences or the arts, and mine was very heavily science. I did science, biology, but I always preferred the history, and obviously the history, as well. I liked history and English. That's the arts.

DePue: So what did you think you wanted to do after high school?

Datz: I had no idea. I knew I was going to go to university, but I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I traveled around with a friend, or came to America, and we traveled around for three weeks, four weeks. It seemed like a good idea to go to optometry school. I thought that would be a good profession. But I didn't get in. They had, like, twenty places for 200 applicants, and certainly my science and math were not strong enough. So I went to university, did a BA, what everybody does. (laughter) I majored in industrial psychology and industrial sociology. You know, you pick topics that interest you. I don't know.

DePue: Industrial psychology.

Datz: Yes.

DePue: In other words, psychology with a career path attached to it once you get done.

Datz: Well, as opposed to clinical psychology, which we all know is therapy and stuff. Industrial is the sort of, I guess, the psychology of work and the workforce, and... I don't know.

DePue: That you'd be working someplace in industry or mining after you graduated?

Datz: Well, I didn't know. I went on to do a graduate degree at the business school.

DePue: What was the university you attended?

Datz: Okay, the University of the Witwatersrand, W-i-t—'wit' is 'white', 'waters' is 'water'—it's an Afrikaans word—w-a-t-e-r-s, rand, r-a-n-d, which is a reef. White waters reef. That was the area of Johannesburg. It was Witwatersrand.

DePue: That close to your neighborhood that you grew up in?

Datz: It was the area. It was the region. I think they don't use that term anymore. So it's University of Witwatersrand. It's known as Wits for short, W-i-t-s. And it's a very good university. It's world class. In many ways, it was sort of a little island of liberalism and academic freedom, to a certain extent, within this apartheid world. In the '50s and '60s it was a hotbed of student activity and protest, anti-apartheid, anti-government protest, but as the years went on they clamped down, so, by the time I got there, there were no protests, because you were not allowed.

DePue: When did you get there?

Datz: Nineteen eighty.

DePue: So you graduated from high school in 1980—

Datz: Nineteen eighty.

DePue: —and started college right away, then.

Datz: Well, I went on vacation. Yeah, I took this trip to America. Started in February 1980, and a BA there is three years. I did that in three years.

DePue: You went to America in 1980?

Datz: Yeah, I traveled with a friend of mine. We came and traveled around.

DePue: Where?

Datz: All across the country. Well, we saw New York, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and then we had—

DePue: (laughter) Phoenix! You went to Phoenix.

Datz: We had friends in Phoenix. Oh yeah, it's not on most people's...

DePue: What was your impression of the United States, coming here in 1980?

Datz: (laughter) It was nice. The shopping was good.

DePue: The shopping was good.

Datz: The exchange rate was even better. It was one rand twenty-five to the dollar. The rand was stronger than the dollar because the price of gold was over $1,000 then. I'd never seen so many fat people in my life. Americans have big teeth. It was nice. What struck me was America's like cinema verite. It's like you see in the movies. Yeah, it was nice. It was nice. I had a nice time. Came back, went to University. You must bear in mind, when I was in high school—this might be something you'd be interested in—it was over the 1976 Soweto Riots, the major turning point in South Africa where the Soweto

Township erupted in riots against the education system, because the blacks were being educated in Afrikaans, and they didn't want it. Not only it was a hated language, they wanted to be educated in English, and protesting against their oppression and their educational oppression. It was the youth. It was the high school youth who started the protest, who many of them had scorn and contempt for their parents for accepting the system. It was a big, big, big time in South Africa. I mean, the military went in and squashed it, but it went on for weeks and weeks and weeks. From then on, things were never the same. This was the beginning, I think, of the end of apartheid. But I remember that vividly. I remember we were sitting, I think, in a history class or something, and intercom came through announcement from the principal that there was rioting in Soweto, and everything's fine, don't worry. It was interesting, the way they handled it. Our lives sort of went on, but things were changing. Things were changing, and we were aware of it.

DePue: What was the police force in Johannesburg? Were these basically from English roots, or were they Afrikaans?

Datz: Afrikaans.

DePue: Even in Johannesburg.

Datz: Oh, yeah. Those sort of level of—civil service became Afrikaans, and the police, who were an arm of the government, and they had a very bad reputation because they were the government's little force. I mean, you had the military, the army, who would come into some serious situations. I mean, when Soweto erupted, the military came in, and police, as well. But the police were the arm of the government. They were hated, because they were the guys who would check your passbooks and beat you up. And then you had of course—throw you in jail. Then you had the whole security apparatus. This is the hand of the government in an authoritarian society, and these were the plainclothes guys who my mother saw pushing a guy into a car, Afrikaans, and committed violent, horrible, horrible... I mean, when the Truth and Reconciliation Committee came out after the end of apartheid, those were the guys. Those were the guys who were seeking amnesty. We knew. There was a highway that ran through downtown, and there was John Vorster Square, the headquarters of the police. John Vorster was one of the worst—you know, one of the old time prime ministers.

DePue: Foster?

Datz: Vorster, V-o-r-s-t-e-r, John Vorster. You knew routinely people "fell" out of windows in John Vorster Square. You knew what was... If you cared to know, you knew what was going on. It was torture and killings and things like this. I consider myself someone knowledgeable. If you wanted to know, you could know what was happening, but even so there were things that you didn't really know, disappearances and murders. Steve Biko was a name of a Pan-

Africanist congress leader who was murdered. If you were of a mind to know what was going on, you knew immediately—you know, they said, "Oh, he died of whatever." He was beaten to death in a cell in John Vorster Square. You knew that. So there were these sort of...

So the thing I say about South Africa and growing up in apartheid, I was fortunate because I was white, but we all were living in an authoritarian, racist society, and everybody is deprived, and everybody is diminished because of it, because you are living under a cloud. You've got to sometimes be careful of what you say, where you go. You self-censor. You don't have freedom of expression, and if you do, it's at risk, who you talk to... And that was there. Fine, we operated within a certain milieu of people who were likeminded, but you never knew. You knew your phones were being tapped, at times. You knew you live in an authoritarian society where there are plainclothes people around watching you, and you're aware of that, and you're careful. For many whites it didn't matter, but I couldn't read certain books I wanted to read because they were banned. I couldn't see certain films that I want to see because they were banned. I couldn't marry a black man if I wanted to because it was banned. I couldn't go and live in a black area any more than a black person could... So I was the more fortunate end of the stick, but I was just as oppressed—not "just as" in terms of the abuse, but I wasn't living in a free society, and that was very much apparent.

DePue: Would you have had legally the opportunity to marry an Afrikaans?

Datz: Oh yeah, within the whites you could. They tended to keep to themselves, but Afrikaans and English did marry. But I couldn't marry a black man.

DePue: How about the police force? You've described the police force and the police state, the mechanisms of the police state, as being dominated by Afrikaans, as well. Was that a matter of policy or just tradition?

Datz: Policy, I think. I think it was policy.

DePue: That English were prohibited or just discouraged from...?

Datz: No, I don't think they were prohibited. I think it was just one of those things. That's how it fell, and the government wanted—those were one of the jobs that were reserved for them, and it was their tool for control.

DePue: Yeah. I'm sure in the United States, in cities like New York City, Irish ended up—

Datz: Being in the police—

DePue: —being very dominant in the police force, but that was a way for them to find some upward mobility.

Datz: Mobility, right.

DePue: Was that the case for the Afrikaans in the police force?

Datz: I don't know how much upward mobility... Well, I guess, yeah. I mean, they would move up into higher ranks of the police, but I'm sure the guys at the top, the security forces, those sort of guys, they were ideologues. I mean, they believed this was their mission. How are we doing for time? (laughter)

DePue: Well, we're at an hour and a half. Do we need to be looking at the watch, though, instead of the time?

Datz: How much more do we want to...?

DePue: I'll tell you what. What I'd like to explore a little bit today and then we can finish, is you got in a little bit about your family's views towards what was going on in Israel, and I'd like to explore that a little bit more. You described them as Zionists, so tell us, from your perspective, what that meant when you were growing up. Because those are pretty powerful words today.

Datz: Yeah, and I will very proudly say I'm a Zionist today, and I work in an organization that is Zionist.

DePue: Yeah, the organization?

Datz: This is Jewish Federation of Springfield, Illinois. Look, my family grew up in the time when there was no Israel, and a time when there was. We have memory of what the world was without an Israel. We have firsthand memory of what happens to Jews when there's no homeland for the Jews. We have firsthand memory that the Jews cannot rely on anybody else to protect them, and this is the Jewish homeland. This is where Judaism started. This is where it began. There's been a continuous presence of Jews in Israel, Palestine, since day one. This is not some post-Holocaust nationalist thing, and that's often forgotten in all the... Obviously the Holocaust gave it more urgency, but it's about a right of self-determination. Because Judaism is not just a religion; it is a people. You know, Jews were slaughtered by Hitler whether they had converted to Christianity or not. The view was that even if we don't live there, we need to support and make sure it's there, because it's a safe haven. The lessons of our history, and especially the Holocaust most recently, and most of the worst, is very profound. So they were supportive of Israel. I don't think they ever thought they'd live there, but they were supporters financially, would have gone to fight then. And, of course, things change over time, but I think, yeah, things change now because it's become a dirty word. The new anti-Semitism is the new anti-Israel, but that's a discussion for another time. (laughter)

DePue: Well, we'll definitely get there, and I think that's very much part of the story. There was this huge influx of Jews to Palestine after World War II, but that

interwar period between World War I and World War II, there's a large influx, as well. But they're moving into an area that at least the predominant population at that time, as I understand, was I guess what we would now call Palestinians. At that time they were called the Arabs, right?

Datz: They were Arabs. But the thing is—what's always forgotten is Jews have always been there. Whether there's influxes or not, there has always been a Jewish presence and a Jewish population there.

DePue: But until the twentieth century a minority population.

Datz: No, just part of the population. This was an area that nothing happened. There was nothing there. It was desert and brush. There were Palestinians there. There were Jews there. There were Arab people. And Palestinians—there were Arabs. The same people who live in Egypt, the same people who live in Syria, Jordan, all these things. Of course, what happened after World War I and the Balfour Declaration was it was all chopped up, and that's where things get a whole 'nother story. But there wasn't—

DePue: And the British are right in the middle of that one, too.

Datz: Exactly. But the point is there wasn't much there at all. It was just land with various peoples, you know? But it wasn't—this impression now that the Jewish came in after, that they were never there—they came in after the war, and took this land from somebody, is simply not accurate, because they were there in less or greater numbers. The people there were no different from the people in the surrounding areas. It was a territory that was carved up by the British. What happened was the Jews wanted, with Zionism and Herzl—this was started in the 1800s—said, "We need to go back to Zion, we need to go back to our homeland," which is Israel. That was this movement. They created a society out of nothing. And I mean nothing. This was not a place anybody (laughter) wanted or cared about. There was no minerals. There's no oil. It's desert and bush. But it all became political. And that's another history lesson.

DePue: You mentioned—

Datz: (laughter) It's too long for now.

DePue: You were very young at this time, but your father was ready to go to Israel in the Six-Day War in 1967?

Datz: Yeah, he signed up.

DePue: Do you remember that, or you just hear the stories afterward?

Datz: No, I just heard the stories.

DePue: How about 1973 and the Yom Kippur War?

Datz: Yeah, I remember that. I remember that. You listened with great fear and concern. Great fear and concern. I remember ’67, something was going on. I didn’t know what my father had done until later, but I do remember it. After that, it was an okay time to be Jewish, because the world was proud of Jews. Nothing in reality has changed but the narrative, and—

DePue: You mean after the Yom Kippur War, and after ’67—

Datz: Yeah, ’67, it’s, well, these Jews—

DePue: Took on everybody and won.

Datz: And won. Then ’73 was a very scary time. And I remember those, absolutely remember those.

DePue: So as far as you were concerned, the family was concerned, the occupation of formerly Syrian or Lebanese—or not Lebanese, but Jordanian lands, and the Sinai Peninsula, that was appropriate?

Datz: What was appropriate was that the Jews had a right to return to their homeland. What was acceptable to us is the fact that when the land was partitioned, and Israel said, “We will take this tiny little sliver, and you are all welcome to live with us,” the Arabs said no. They were prepared to take an area that is far smaller than it is now and say “We want...” You know, this little area of a land that nobody seemed to give a crap about, suddenly... And we said fine. We said yes, and they said no, and this was the first of three nos. And no, no, no, never in our lifetime, this isn’t going to happen. You’re going to be wiped out. We’re going to wipe you off the map. I’ve heard that before. They went to war in 1948. And after 1948—

DePue: I think the day after the UN resolution where they created the state of Israel.

Datz: Right, they went to war. Israel said, “We will live in peace with you. You can be with us. You can be on the other side of this little strip of land, and you can live here. Whichever you want is fine with us. We just want our little bit.” That was not acceptable. So they went to war. Israel prevailed, and went to war again. What we’re dealing with now is the 1967 war. It’s not over. The thing is, they gained territory in 1967, and Israel said, “We will give back territory if you accept our existence,” and they said no again, and so it goes.

DePue: So the first no was ’48, the second no was ’67—

Datz: Second is ’67, and ever since then. And, unfortunately, the Palestinians is a created notion. They’re Arabs. They’re the same people as the surrounding territory. There’s so much to talk about here, and I’m going to lose my meter in a minute. The point is, Jordan—many of them were Jordanians, whatever, became the Nation of Jordan. Many lived there, who they have no rights amongst the Jordanians. The Jordanians illegally occupied Jerusalem, which

was liberated in 1967. This whole notion of Israel being—Jerusalem having east and west is a nonsense. Jerusalem has been one city eternally. From the beginning of time it's been Jerusalem, except in 1948 when the Jordanians occupied half of it illegally. It was liberated in 1967, and it's Jerusalem again. It's one city, and all nations and all religions can worship there. Not the same when it's in Arab hands; they did not allow Jews to go to their religious site. Anyway, the Palestinian people have become a reality because of the United Nations Relief, UNWRA, Relief and whatever. The only peoples in the world that there are permanent refugees. It's an outrage. Nowhere else in the world have refugees become this permanent situation. They have been victims of their leadership, because they've been used by Arab nations as a pawn to get rid of Israel, because no Arab country would absorb them, no Arab country would make peace, and that's where we are. Now it's you've got to give back land that you won in a war. Well, where in the world does that happen? When there are real security issues. You know, Israel is nine miles wide at its narrowest point.

DePue: This is probably a question you can't answer quickly, but it'll be the last question I ask today. What is it about the existence of Israel or the presence of Jews in Israel that causes the intense animosity among the Arab world?

Datz: I think it's rooted in the Islamic religion that has some vile anti-Semitic stuff in it. Now, this is not to say all Muslims are anti-Semites, but when Jews are described as the sons of pigs and monkeys and it's in the Quran, it's a problem. There is a notion in Arab Muslim societies that it is intolerable to have a non-Muslim on their land, and you have non-Muslims on their land, what they perceive as their land, and it's become an extraordinarily successful country. I think it's a source of shame and embarrassment. You know, you say, what is the problem with a little, little, little, little country that most people haven't a clue how small it is, have this little strip of land? They don't have the oil. They don't have anything. Why do you hate it so? The Grand Mufti of Jerusalem before the war was a big pal of Hitler. There is deep anti-Semitism in this society. It's being fed. It's being bred. The children are being taught to hate. You hear speeches out of mosques to go kill Jews, there's no such thing as a good Jew, they should all die. It's being bred. Where it comes from, I don't know, but it's deep. It's deep, and it's profound.

DePue: Why don't we start on a happier note next time, and—

Datz: I would like that. (laughter)

DePue: Meeting Michael. Maybe we'll pick up with that next time.

Datz: Okay, all right. Thank you.

DePue: Thank you, Jo. It's been a lot of fun.

(end of interview #1 #2 continues)

Interview with Josephine Datz

IM-A-L-2012-025.02
Interview # 2: July 5, 2012
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Thursday, July 5, 2012. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, and today I'm with Josephine Datz, Jo Datz, and this is our second time. We had a very interesting discussion last time about growing up in South Africa in the midst of apartheid, and growing up Jewish in South Africa. I think where we need to pick it up today is about the time that you graduated from college, and your first job. So when did that happen?

Datz: I graduated from graduate school in 1985, '84—end of '84. Yeah, gosh, I've got to think. I went overseas. No, that was '80. Hang on. (laughter)

DePue: Yeah, you'd already told us about a trip to the United States.

Datz: No, that was after high school. Then after business school I went overseas—yeah, I did, for six months.

DePue: Where did you go?

Datz: Six months or three months. No, six months. I went to Europe. (laughter) I went to Europe and Israel with a friend of mine. We went backpacking. Yeah, sort of the South African thing to do. A lot of Australians and South Africans do, because it's so far from Europe, when you go as a student you go for a long time. So we went. It was sort of April to October sort of thing. We started out in Israel, traveled around Israel.

DePue: Was that your first trip there?

Datz: No. I'd been there when I was thirteen in 1976. This was 1985, and it was the first time on my own. And yeah, we traveled around. We had an unfortunate experience there. My friend, who's very blonde—very blonde—was attacked by Arab kid in—

DePue: Well, you were very blonde, too, I would say.

Datz: I was blonder then. (laughter) Yeah, but she was really blonde. It was not a pleasant experience, but it was just before we were due to leave Israel. We took a ferry from Haifa to what was going to be—you know, to Athens was the idea. It was awful. It was a Cyprian ferry full of young people with no money, (laughter) which was us. It was such an unpleasant experience, seasickness and just awful, that we stopped in Cyprus, and then the next stop was in Rhodes, the island of Rhodes in Greece, and we got off, because I couldn't stand another minute of it. So I didn't care where it was, I was getting off. As it turned out, it's a beautiful place. I don't know if you've been to Rhodes. It's a wonderful, beautiful... Lot of history. Lot of Jewish history there, actually, too. Then we toddled around there, did a few other islands, and unfortunately on the ferry trip to Athens my friend slipped a disc in her back, and we ended up at midnight in Athens at a Greek hospital. Anyway, we're sort of laid up in Athens for a while, and then she decided to go on to England, where she had family, and I stayed in Athens for a little bit longer. Then I went on to England. I had family there, and I stayed with my grandmother. I was in London for three months.

DePue: Most of the time with your family there, your mom's family?

Datz: Well, yeah, my grandmother, saw some of my cousins, and then at one point I stayed with some friends, South Africans who'd lived in England for many years, since the early '60s. I stayed with them, too, sort of moved around. I wanted to work. I couldn't get a job because I didn't have a permit to do it. Then one day—in August, I think—I was standing in the middle of Piccadilly Circus, and thought: If I don't get out of here I'm going to scream. You know, the mass of humanity and people all the time was driving me insane. So I booked a trip to Italy, and I went to Italy for a couple of weeks, and so it was wonderful. Wonderful.

DePue: There wasn't a mass of humanity in Italy?

Datz: No, there's space. There's space. There's sunshine. Well, there's sunshine in England, but it was sort of...

DePue: Were you—

Datz: I mean, I'm not a big fan of England, so just everything about Italy was wonderful. It was just a sense of space, and less claustrophobia. You know, and England, the countryside's claustrophobic to me, because it's small.

DePue: Even the countryside. Why?

Datz: It's this hedgerow. You know, you drive around the woods, country or whatever, and there's this pretty field; it was very pretty and green, but there's hedgerows, so your roads are like this, and you just don't have a sense of big sky and expansion, which is why I can do better in America than England, honestly. There's that sense of—

DePue: Yeah, all you have to do is get on the interstate and there's the big sky.

Datz: Exactly, there's big sky, and blue, you know. It's important to me. It's the African in me, I think. And I'll tell you a story. My parents lived in England, went back to England just before I was born. They went back to South Africa while my mother was pregnant with me, and my father was studying there. He was studying tropical medicine in England. He remembers desperately just driving on the M6, the main motorway, just to have an uninterrupted drive. (laughter) He obviously had the same feeling about it as I did.

DePue: Well, how about Israel? What was your impression of Israel?

Datz: I'm trying to discern from the first time I was there, when I was younger. The first time I went, it was fascinating, and it was... What struck me: at the time, I had mixed feelings about Israel, because it was shortly after the Lebanese War. I wasn't sure about the Israel policy, and all of this, feeling eh. We had a good time. It's very important to go and to see it and to really be there to pass judgment rather than from a distance. So I came away with a different feeling. What always strikes me about Israel is it's very strange to be in an environment where everybody's Jewish—most people. I mean, obviously there are Arabs, but the majority of Jewish. As a Jew, you're never in that situation.

DePue: Was your friend Jewish?

Datz: No. No. She married an Israeli finally, subsequently.

DePue: That she met when she was on vacation there?

Datz: No, no, later on.

DePue: Well, one of the reasons I asked, you felt claustrophobic in England; well, Israel is about as tiny as you can get as a country.

Datz: Yeah, but I wasn't living there, and it was warmer. England it was three months of being and commuting and—I might feel the same way about Israel if I lived there, too. But compared to the first time I was in Israel was very much the old socialist Israel, the traditional pioneer, the Kibbutz and that sort of thing. The second time, in 1985, it was starting to become more capitalist. You'd see just more capitalist shops and dressing and that sort of thing. And,

of course, I went in 2009; it's completely the opposite. So it's different society every time. It's quite a different country.

DePue: Is it more cosmopolitan now when you go back, as well?

Datz: Absolutely. I mean, first of all, you've had different waves of immigration. So in '76 and '85, when I went, it was before the Russian immigration, which was massive. Millions of Russian Jews came. It really changed the whole feel of Israel in many ways. In many ways, it's very Middle Eastern, and in many ways it's got more of a Western tilt, too, now. Now it's become far more capitalist, far more… The food scene has improved. It's more sophisticated. It's more all those sort of things than it used to be. It's a remarkable place to see what a little country, sixty-four years old, has achieved as a country.

DePue: So after England, [you] went to Italy, saw the historic sites. Were you in Rome?

Datz: I was in Rome, Florence, Venice, Pisa, the sort of—what's it called—the top north—

DePue: The Pyrenees area, or...?

Datz: No, not as far north. I went down as far as Positano and—oh gosh, my recall of names is terrible. I did a good bit of it.

DePue: How were you financing this?

Datz: I worked. I worked as a student in jobs, and I saved my money, and I did it on the cheap. (laughter) It helped when I was in England I could stay with family, so I didn't have to pay for accommodation. That's why I could stay for three months.

DePue: And then headed home after.

Datz: And then headed home, which was very nice.

DePue: What, you mean you were ready to get home after all of that?

Datz: Yeah, yeah. I did consider not going back and maybe I should stay overseas, and maybe I should get a job and move to England or whatever, but it didn't happen. It was so half-hearted. I don't think I really wanted to. So I went home and looked for a job, and I got one. I got one with a labor relations consultancy, one of the top consultants, and one of the few labor relations consultants in South Africa at the time. It was 1985. It was the height of the industrial unrest and growth of unionism to a really significant point. This group, Andrew Levy and Associates, was a top flight labor consultant. The main partner had got his labor relations stripes working at Ford - Dagenham in England. There was major unrest there in the '70s. It was a management

consultancy, advising management, major corporations, many of them American, multinationals, and how to handle this new phenomenon. You know, it was really asserting itself.

DePue: The new phenomenon of labor unions?

Datz: Of labor unions. They had always existed in South Africa, from the turn of the century. The African labor movement from about 1910 on had existed, but with great or lesser success, obviously. But the '80s saw really a rise in their activity and the power and their assertion, and very political, of course.

DePue: How does the labor movement fit into the apartheid system and race relations? Were these white unions, black unions?

Datz: Actually, when one talks about the labor movement of South Africa, there was both. There were white unions, but they were mostly sort of skilled—what's the word for it? Like iron makers, you know, of a particular skill. They had their fraternal organization.

DePue: Yeah, the craft kind of skill.

Datz: The craft, exactly. But because the blacks were by and large the unskilled labor, this was more the unionism in this very traditional English sense more than the American sense. I mean, it was a very different system to America. There, the head of it was called the general secretary, not the executive director, which speaks volumes, doesn't it? So it had existed. I'm going back through my cobwebs here about the history of South African trade unionism, but the main African unions started in the turn of the century, and I'm sure there was activity, but obviously faced oppression and setbacks because of apartheid laws. There were changes in labor legislation during the '80s, which allowed them to have more of a say and to represent and actually function as proper unions, have elections and check-off facilities and those sort of things. So it was a combination of changed legislation. Many of the American organizations, and the multinationals, English and British, were governed by different rules, of course. The American companies were governed by—what's it? They were required to abide by American labor standards. They could not benefit by the local standard.

DePue: Is that according to South African law, or their—

Datz: No, that was according to theirs. It was passed by Congress, because this was to the start of the disinvestment movement and the push to end apartheid. I've forgotten the name; it was named after an American legislator.

DePue: Was this something specific, then, to South Africa, that the American companies working there?

Datz: Probably. Probably. You know, there was a big move to disinvest completely, and some companies did, like Kodak. But the British companies had to abide by EEC rules, and they had to have more equal labor standards. They had different labor guidelines and standards that their companies adopted.[1] It'll come to me, the name of the American equivalent.

DePue: We can always get that in the transcript.

Datz: Okay.

DePue: I don't want to get bogged down on it.

Datz: No, but anyway, so the point is, it made it a very interesting time, and a lot of those practices were being translated and copied by other companies. They sort of set the standard.

DePue: Well, what exactly did you do for the firm, then?

Datz: I started out as a research associate, so I was doing research and writing and getting their library sorted out, and would write papers on things, or research documents on various unions, what they were, what they were about, what their position was. I helped organize conferences, and spoke at conferences about some of these factors, and changes to the labor law, and that sort of thing. Then I moved into consulting, and did more consulting.

DePue: Actually going out and working with these various companies?

Datz: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: Well, maybe this is my own prejudice showing here, but how does a young, attractive, Jewish girl deal with all these union people, who I assume were a little bit older, and—

Datz: Yeah.

DePue: —set in their ways, perhaps, and...

Datz: (laughter) Well, look, certainly at my level in the beginning I would do it—I mean, I was young; I was twenty-five or something, twenty-four—I would do it with one of the other partners. I think my Jewishness was neither here nor there; you know, I was just a young female. You're mostly dealing with management at that level, behind the scenes. I wouldn't be negotiating directly with the union, but I visited sites, which is what it was. It wasn't an issue. But of course, you asked about how it plays into the apartheid thing. Everything about labor relations in the '80s in South Africa was political, because that is where industry is. This is mostly private sector; there was no

[1] Sullivan Principles; Labor Standards Bill 1983

public sector I did private sector. Industry was where everybody met and worked together, black, white, pink, blue. It was a microcosm. They had to learn to get along. Every demand of the union was political, and it went beyond bread and butter issues. It went to housing and medical care and whatever, which I guess in most societies are economic issues, but there the economic was the political was the economic. So it all became intertwined. So, in fact, there was a lot of unrest. There was violence. There were some very ugly strikes. But it was the start of the negotiation process for the end of apartheid, or for the new society, because that's where people started negotiating things. Many of the ANC leadership, leadership, were unionists. In fact, most of the former unionists became major business owners and sat on boards of mines and things when the new South Africa came.

DePue: ANC, African Na—

Datz: African National Congress, who took over the government and still is in control.

DePue: Were you, by that time, participating at all in politics?

Datz: I was always very politically aware, very politically involved—I mean, politically to the extent that I was passionate about what was going on, and very aware, and that was always the situation. But it was an intense time. One's whole life was.

DePue: Well, I assume there was at least a couple white parties. I mean, you had both the old Afrikaans and you had the English influence. How would you have voted at that time?

Datz: I would have voted... It was... The Afrikaner Nationalist Party was the party in power, and then you had other Afrikaans parties to the right of them, various kinds Afrikaans, such as the AfricanerVeerstandsbeweging beyond the pale, almost neo-Nazi-like. Then you had a party that changed names many times. It started out, I think, early on as the United Party. Then there's the Progressive Party, then the Progressive Democratic Party. But it was one liberal anti-apartheid white party that was for many years the official opposition, and that's who I would have voted for. But over the years the name changed. (laughter) Then when apartheid changed there was a couple of other parties and changes and shifts in there, but... And, in fact, at one point the official opposition, after apartheid, against the ANC, was the Nationalist Party, was the opposition rather than—you know, it shifted. So I voted—there were a couple of referenda that I voted in, opposing any restrictions. It was easy, you know. You were for or you were against.

DePue: Were you actively involved with any religious activities at the time?

Datz: I wasn't involved religiously, but I was part of an organization that we formed in about 1987, '86, '87, called Jews for Social Justice. It was a group—it was

sort of brought together—I can't remember how it formed, but I was one of the initial people involved in starting this, for young Jews who felt as Jews, and as our tradition teaches and our history and our experience, we have to oppose this and stand against this, because this cuts very close to the bone. I don't know that it went anywhere, but for a little while it was a bit of a movement within the Jewish community.

DePue: If you were to boil down the core beliefs or the positions that that group took?

Datz: It just was sort of you've got to stand, you've got to speak out against injustice. You can't just... Because there was a tendency amongst some in the Jewish community to just quietly go about their business. The idea was you can't. You've got to speak out vocally that this is not right, and it's not right on a moral basis. And particularly, Jews have to speak out because of our history.

DePue: Was the group advocating a vote for all South Africans?

Datz: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

DePue: And to abolish entirely the apartheid system?

Datz: Absolutely. There was never any parts of this and that. It had to go. Then, of course, in university there was a lot of campus activism. For a lot of white South Africans, going to university, especially—I went to a big liberal university—and they suddenly, for the first time, got exposure to what really apartheid means, and they were awakened and appalled, and many of them... You know, as students do. I mean, it's the same everywhere, and they march, or they get incensed, and very much take on a Marxist perspective. A lot of the courses I took, the faculty were very Marxist. They had a Marxist perspective of the history of South Africa, response to South Africa as a solution to apartheid. For me, it wasn't this big, wide awakening, because I was wide awake before, so there was nothing new in what I experienced. I was never a student who went with the Marxist perspective, either. I had a problem with it. I didn't believe in it. I was more of a mainstream kind of kid. I never went the sort of radical element, the way many students did.

DePue: Well, I know there was a significant element of the Communists in the first couple elections after apartheid.

Datz: Right.

DePue: Was that primarily a white or primarily a black movement?

Datz: It's a black... There is a Communist party, still. It's predominantly black, I guess, but I think a lot of the leadership are white. Many of them were academics, many that I had. Some of the students went the route of joining the ANC underground. I mean, there's one guy who was in my sociology class

who was jailed for terrorism, trying to blow up something or other. He was an Afrikaner who obviously, whatever, felt—and he subsequently became a minister in the ANC government.

DePue: Jews for Social Justice.

Datz: Justice.

DePue: Would that have been considered a revolutionary group by the officials at the time?

Datz: It depends how far it went. It didn't go far enough to cause any kind of trouble, or to really cause suspicion, I think. It just didn't materialize enough. But it could've. You know, it could've.

DePue: I wanted to ask you just a couple questions about your social life at the time, and this is obviously kind of leading up to meeting Michael here. So what were you doing to have fun and relax, and then why?

Datz: (laughter) I had my own apartment, and I had friends, and we'd do what people do: go to movies, go to concerts, go to theater, shop. I had a good friend whose family had a house—it's a little bit outside Johannesburg. It's on a dam, part of Hartebeespoort Dam. We'd often spend weekends there just relaxing and swimming and that sort of thing. Just doing what young people do, going on dates, having one's heart broken, (laughter) you know, liking people, they didn't like you back. You know, the usual!

DePue: Well, then how did you meet Michael?

Datz: Okay, it's a funny story, really. It's a long story, long-ish. Anyway—

DePue: We like long stories.

Datz: Yeah. (laughter) It was '87, 1987, July, and my brother-in-law, my sister's husband's one brother was getting married. The rabbi who was going to marry them was a young American chap. My sister's mother-in-law, so the mother of the groom, said to me, "Oh, I'm going to put you at the rabbi's table." "Why? I mean, why on Earth would you put me at the rabbi's table?" (laughter) "Well, he's young, and he's American, and single." "I don't care! I mean, I don't want to meet a rabbi." It was so insane to put me at the rabbi's table. I mean, I'm not religious. This is laughable. So anyway, I go to the wedding. I see him do the wedding, it was him, and I go to the reception and he's not there. He doesn't come to the table. So, great. (laughter) Got out of that one, left the wedding, whatever and that was that. Then about December, four months later, I come home from work and there's a message on my answering machine from a friend of mine who says, "Have I got a Jewish boy for you!" So I called her back and she says, "But don't be prejudiced because he's a rabbi. I really think you'll get on. He's funny. He's smart. I think he can

handle you. (laughter) But he's a rabbi." I said, it's got to be the same guy. (laughter) I mean, how many rabbis are there running around that people want to introduce me to? And not Orthodox, obviously. I mean that's a big thing. I said, "All right, if you really think this through, and you really think we'll get on, I'm happy to meet him if you arrange an evening. I don't want a one-on-one, and so I'll have a rabbi as a friend. It'll be interesting."

So she arranges an evening with about twenty other people. We all go for dinner at an Indian restaurant, December 12, 1987. And he comes. He comes late, because he was doing a wedding for some Americans; they were serving Mexican food, (laughter) and he was missing Mexican food so much. So he came late. We chatted, and we got on well, and he was a nice guy, and we got on well. But for me, it was like, okay, I'm not interested, because I don't want a rabbi. It's as simple as that. Well, he was quite smitten, apparently, and called me back the next day. I was going away. I scuba dived at that point, and I was going scuba diving. Anyway, so we sort of saw each other, and this, that, and the other, and it just—it took me a long time to come to terms with **the fact that he was** a rabbi. I mean, I was not interested. This wasn't anything I was interested in. I guess when you start dating a rabbi it's not a casual thing. (laughter) You just... You know, you either do it or you don't. But so sort of—I don't know, I guess he wore me down.

DePue: (laughter) How romantic! He wore you down!

Datz: Well, he did. I mean, he came this close to pissing me off completely, but I guess he won me over.

DePue: Would it have been different if this was... Did it have to be a Jewish guy that your friends were hooking you up with, or could it have been anybody?

Datz: It could have been anybody. And I always thought—

DePue: Except a rabbi.

Datz: (laughter) Yes, exactly! Not too Jewish. No, truly. I mean, I didn't want anyone religiously Jewish, by definition Orthodox. I was of the mindset, oh, it doesn't matter, as long as you love each other. That's all that matters. And yet, every person I ever dated before just that were all Jewish. I think what it came down to—and my stepmother's not Jewish, but it came down to: I just have more in common with Jews, just because there's a level of unspokenness that you don't have to explain, whether it's using a Yiddishism, or knowing... You know, I guess it's just easier. It's easier, and it wasn't a conscious thing, but when I thought back on it they were all Jewish. He was American, which was different. Part of it was coming to terms with—I had to decide. I said, do you ultimately dismiss somebody for what they do? Because part of what made him such a special person was what made him want to be a rabbi in the first place, you know? So how do you just say, "Well, you're fine, but if only you

weren't a rabbi"? Also, my image of a rabbi was a ninety-year-old, ultra-Orthodox rabbi, with a long beard (laughter) and he wasn't. He was young. He was irreverent. He wasn't Orthodox. So I had to come to terms with all of that.

DePue: Well, gosh, I've got about a million different questions (laughter) and can go in a million different ways.

DePue: Well, let's find out more about Michael's background.

Datz: Okay. Michael was born in Houston, Texas. His father was from Brooklyn. His mother was from St. Louis. His father, he doesn't know a lot about his history, because he didn't know much. He was a descendant of Russian Jews is all he knows, born in America. His mother's side was German Jews, came over turn of the century, and prewar, I think.

DePue: Pre...?

Datz: The Second World War, as well. I know he had an aunt who was close to a hundred who had a very strong German accent, so clearly had come over at some point. His mother was born in America, though. She came from a fairly middle class, well-to-do family. Not well-to-do, but middle class, came through the Depression okay. They ran kennels, I think, in St. Louis or something. Went to Houston in the '50s, which was a bit of a cow town then. It's not what it is now.

DePue: Well, it's also not the place that I would normally think where a lot of Jews decided to move.

Datz: Oh, there are. No, and it's interesting; there are a lot of first generation Jews in Houston, because many Jews came in through Houston, through Galveston. It actually is a port of entry for a lot of Jewish immigrants.

DePue: European immigrants? European Jews?

Datz: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You need to look that up, immigrant person. Seriously! There is a whole history there. And, in fact, I did read something about it a while back, about the Jews who came in to Houston, and the whole South, and many of them moved inwards, but also to other Southern states. So many of the Jews from the South came through Galveston, which was a port of entry. Some of his friends have been Houston Jews from the time their parents arrived here. Mike's mother had been married before and had a daughter, and was divorced, and she was adopted by Mike's father. So it's his sister, but technically his half-sister. They're seven years apart. He grew up in Houston. He went to school. He went to Rice University to study architecture. He always wanted to be an architect, and then did architecture, and then felt, no, he wasn't talented enough or whatever, so he gave it up, and didn't know what to do, and was sort of flirting with the rabbinate but couldn't quite go there, or see himself in that position. So he went to law school, because that's what all

Americans do who don't know what to do? They go to law school. So he did. He went to law school.

DePue: At Rice?

Datz: No, I think University of Houston. Hated it. Hated it. This isn't what he wanted to do, but he did it anyway. Took the Bar. At that point I think he already had decided to go to rabbinic school. Part of it was he belonged to a large Reform congregation in Houston, Temple Emmanuel, and the rabbi there was a big deal in the Reform Jewish movement, Rabbi Kahn. He'd written books. You know, he was quite a man of stature. He had a lot of influence over Mike, but I think Mike couldn't see himself as that person, because he just wasn't God. (laughter) Then Rabbi Kahn retired, and the next rabbi came, and I think he saw that he could be this person, and everything about being a rabbi appealed to him. It's varied, and it's diverse, and it's the studying and the writing and the whole aspect of being a rabbi. He found a lot of comfort;he always feels he was most happiest when he was in temple. So he went to rabbinic school in Cincinnati; the Reform rabbinic school, UAHC, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, or something like that, is the Reform rabbinic school. The main campus is in Cincinnati, but I think they have a campus in New York and LA now, as well.

DePue: Union of American Hebrew—

Datz: Hebrew Congregations.

DePue: Congregations.

Datz: UAHC. The first year of rabbinic school is in Israel, Jerusalem, so he spent his first year there, and then came back, and it's five years of rabbinic school. So he'd been studying a long time. (laughter) He did architecture, law, rabbi. During his summers, while he was studying he would travel a lot. He's very widely traveled. He went to all sorts of countries. He was the traveling rabbi. He did a summer stint in Sydney, Australia**, and also** went to South Africa in one of them, but also traveled a lot. So that's him. Then one of his summers he was working at South Africa, and the senior rabbi said, "When you're ordained, come back and be an assistant rabbi," and that's how he ended up in South Africa.

DePue: At a Reform congregation.

Datz: Yeah.

DePue: But there wasn't much of a Reform presence in South Africa?

Datz: Well, no, but there were still some—in Johannesburg there were three congregations. As I said, there were the two that merged, which is where he went, and there was another one. There was one in Durban. There was one in

Cape Town. And that was it, you know. So there was, I mean, and there is a presence, but it's not as strong. It never was quite as extreme. America went through—in the turn of the century Reform started out, what was called Classical Reform, which became very churchlike. They did away with a lot of the traditional stuff and very Protestant in style, and it's moved away from that. South Africa never went through that kind of style. That would've been way too extreme. But it was mixed seating. Some of them had an organ. It depended on the level of the rabbi, and a different prayer book, different philosophy.

DePue: What was the impact on reform congregations on the reform movement of the Holocaust itself?

Datz: Well, Reform started before pre-Holocaust. It started in Germany in the late 1800s. It wasn't, obviously, a response to that, but it was a reaction against the ultra-Orthodox, and the sense of assimilation of we want to be Germans first and we're not this parochial Orthodox type of Judaism that came out of the shtetls of Russia. It was an assertion of a different kind of Jewish experience. How it changed post-Holocaust, I don't know. It was established as a movement well before then, and in America it's the predominant stream of Judaism.

DePue: Okay. Well, you mentioned yourself the difficulty, the hurdle you had to overcome dating a rabbi. Do I want to date a rabbi? How about your family, your father?

Datz: (laughter) They were a little stunned. They were a little shocked, and, weren't quite sure, you know. But I think they liked him, and they weren't going to talk me out of it necessarily. My mother was living in America at the time, so she hadn't met him. But I described him, talked about him, and it just was sort of okay. My sister at our wedding gave a funny speech, and she sort of said, "Rabbi, you're crazy." Each one said, "Rabbi, you're mad." My grandmother said, "Rabbi, you'll adapt." (laughter) You know, it was that kind of thing. I'm sure they had their doubts, or they thought I would change. A lot of people thought I'd become much more religious, and I haven't. I haven't.

DePue: When did he ask? How long into the relationship did he ask you to marry him?

Datz: We met December 12, 1987, and we got engaged on Halloween '88, so that was October thirty-first. I think he was looking for a date he'd remember, and so made a big deal... Yeah, in America, you know, Halloween's Halloween, and so we went out for dinner, and he proposed. We'd been talking around it for a while, but it was still… And he'd asked my father's hand and permission, and my father said, "You think you can keep her in the style to which she's accustomed?" (laughter) He lied! No. Then we got married May 22, 1989, six months later.

DePue: A traditional Jewish wedding?

Datz: Yeah, in a Reform temple.

DePue: Well, what is that like? I guess I have these images—

Datz: No, it's a very traditional. It was the same. I mean, the thing about a Jewish wedding is a Jewish wedding is a Jewish wedding. The only difference being in an Orthodox one—I mean, ultra-Orthodox the men and women are separated, the men don't dance with the women, that sort of thing, so it was none of that. Traditionally the woman walks around the man seven times in the ceremony, and Reform has made that more egalitarian, so I walked around him three times, and he walked around me three times. But otherwise it was a traditional Jewish wedding, which is a very nice ceremony.

DePue: I'm curious what the symbolism of the woman walking around the man seven times.

Datz: Well, the idea is... Well, and it depends who's interpreting it, but I'm sure the traditional tradition is they are the center of your life and you're going to serve them or whatever, and Reform made this more egalitarian, so you each are each other's center of each other's life, something like that.

DePue: Okay.

Datz: Yeah. It was a nice wedding.

DePue: When you got married was the expectation that you were going to be going to the United States and living there?

Datz: No. You know, I knew that chances are marrying an American maybe one day we'll end up in America, but he said to me he liked South Africa and he was happy to stay there forever, which was fine with me. Then a year later he changed his mind. (laughter)

DePue: Would it have been a bigger hurdle for you to say yes when he proposed if you knew that it was going to be meant that you're coming here?

Datz: I don't know. I don't know. You know...

DePue: It was a bigger hurdle that he was a rabbi. That was the thing—

Datz: That was the thing. Yeah. The fact that he was an American wasn't the thing. I think part of his Americanness was the appeal to me, because he was more… South African men are fairly traditional, and can be fairly chauvinistic, and he was not. He was brought up in a different attitude which appealed to me more. But he reached a point where he needed to move from the congregation. I think it wasn't working out so well with his senior rabbi. He needed to be on

his own. At the other Johannesburg congregation, there wasn't an opening, but there was in Durban. We were going to go down to Durban, and he was going to be the rabbi there, and we thought that it wouldn't be a permanent thing, maybe for a few years, and then try and come back to Johannesburg. That was the plan. Then Mike felt if we're going to move, we should move to the States. I think he was feeling very much that he wanted to be back where the mainstream was Reform. I think he felt very alienated or removed from the mainstream Judaism that he knew, which was Reform, whereas there it was so put upon and such the minority. Even though he could come back for conferences, I think he just… It wasn't an environment that he enjoyed particularly. You know, and you're young and you're married, and you say, "Oh, whatever makes you happy," (laughter) and all like that. So we moved, but we didn't have a job to go to. We spoke to the Movement, which helps place rabbis. They said, "Oh, come, it's fine. We'll get you something." Then not shortly after we left there was an opening in Johannesburg, and I think that might've made a difference had that been open at the time where we wouldn't have had to move to Durban; we could've just gone to a different position in Johannesburg. We might've stayed a little longer. That came up, like, six months later, but by then we'd already moved. So because we didn't have anything here, there was a sabbatical position replacement open in Curaçao, in the Caribbean, so we went there for six months.

DePue: When was that?

Datz: October 1990.

DePue: Okay, and you knew that was just temporary, and—

Datz: Yeah, we knew it was a six-month sabbatical thing, or more than six months, I guess. We left South Africa. We went to Rio. We went through South America. It was fun, got mugged. Went to Curaçao—

DePue: That was fun, got mugged. (laughter) The mugging wasn't the fun part, though?

Datz: The fun part, no, no. But we'd been warned, you know, there's a lot of violence and crime, and that's a story on its own, but anyway. I think we went to—I think we went straight to Curaçao. We were there six months. There's a very, very historic community there. The oldest synagogue in the Western hemisphere in continuous use is in Curaçao.

DePue: Where were the Jews from who originated there?

Datz: Well, they were mostly Dutch descent or Latin, from South America. It was an interesting mix, because the congregation was established in the 1600s, Sephardic, based on the Sephardic synagogue in Amsterdam, so it's a very beautiful building, sand on the floors, which are the Sephardic thing in Holland—and recall I have some Dutch Jewish blood in me. They think the

tradition of the sand on the floor was to muffle the sounds of Jews studying in secret during the Inquisition, that that's where it came from. So there's sand on the floors. Killer on your shoes. But it's an old Jewish community. Many of the Jews came from Spain and Portugal; some might've gone via South America to Curaçao.

DePue: See, that would've been my guess, but that ties into the Inquisition again.

Datz: Yeah, yeah, and expulsion from Spain is when they moved, and many went to Holland because it was the Reformation that was Protestant. Curaçao was Dutch owned, so they went there. Some came via South America. Many from Venezuela have moved there. But that's where we see... So it was an Orthodox Sephardic community, very old, very proud. There was a Reform congregation built there in the 1800s, which has subsequently closed and merged.

It's the strangest thing: it's this mush-mash of Sephardic, Orthodox, Reform... They do all sorts of funny little things, like they count women in the minyan, which a traditional Orthodox Jewish service doesn't count women as part of. You have to have ten Jews to pray certain prayers. Orthodoxy doesn't count women as part of those ten. So this congregation counted women, but women weren't called up to the Torah, 'cause Orthodoxy doesn't allow women to come to the Torah, touch the Torah, or that. They have this compromise ridiculousness. They also offer a prayer. It's something called the Misha Berach Prayer. It's a prayer of offering of health and whatever. They do it in Portuguese to the Dutch queen. I mean, it's that sort of thing. What's very interesting about the community—and it was a very interesting experience for us, because our experience is Ashkenazy, European—this was Sephardic, very Latin, very Latin people.

Then just before the war there was an influx of Russian Jews who came to Curaçao, seeking rescue. The native Jews, the Sephardim, were very hostile to them. They looked down on them. They saw them as inferior. They were poorer peasants, and they felt they are sophisticated. They did very little to help them, and there was very bad blood. So they had their own little Orthodox, what's called the shtiebel, and it's operated out of a house with Ashkenazy tradition, and then you have this big, grand synagogue. For many years there was no mixing, and intermarriage would've been considered... Between Sephardim and Ashkenazim, the Sephardim were more willing to marry a native Curaçaoan descendent of slaves than they would an Ashkenazy Jew. It was unbelievable. We have more in common with Ashkenazy, just because it was a familiar worldview, humor, you know, that sort of thing. So it was a very interesting insight into the different cultures.

DePue: So why did the Reforms decide to send Michael there?

Datz: Because the rabbi who was there was a Reform... Oh it also was a mixture of Reform, because they merged with a Reform congregation. It was a mixture of Reform, Sephardic Orthodox, and they used a different prayer book, not Reform, not Conservative, a Reconstructionist prayer book, so that's another stream of Judaism. It was a complete mish-mash. I guess they were placed through them. I mean, that's how they did it. So the rabbi who was there was a Reform rabbi, he brought his own thing, but you had to follow some of their traditions, and high holy days, Yom Kippur and that, the men would wear top hats and tails. (laughter) Strange. He was a replacement for this rabbi for six months who went on sabbatical.

DePue: Was this an independent country at the time?

Datz: No, it's a Dutch protectorate. It's the capital of the Dutch Antilles.

DePue: So it's not part of Venezuela, it's—

Datz: No, but you can see Venezuela from there. It's very close. It's the ABC islands: Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao. Then there's Saint Martin and Sabu are the five Dutch Antilles. Curaçao is the capital. The main industry there is the fact that it's a capital, and the second is oil refinery. There was a Shell Oil in Venezuela, I know, at one point, but Shell Oil, Dutch Shell was there. Then third was tourism. It was interesting. We lived there for six months.

DePue: Pretty place?

Datz: Not in your typical Caribbean island pretty. I think Saint Martin and Sabu are much prettier, because they're green and more rolling. Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao are desert islands, actually, so they are thorn trees and dust, dry. There's no natural water. All the water comes from desalination, which the Israelis showed them how to do, as it happens. In many ways, it was strange, because it was a good transition from South Africa, because there's Dutch influence, and Dutch spoken, and Dutch people, so that was kind of similar to South Africa. There was this dry brush, which was like parts of South Africa. Plenty of beaches, not long beaches like Aruba, smaller but pretty. But the island itself was not beautiful particularly. The capital, Willemstad, is very pretty. The buildings have Dutch gables, and that was also familiar to m,e in this mustard and yellow colors. So it's a very pretty downtown. But as an island, it's not that beautiful green, lush thing that you imagine when you think of a Caribbean island.

DePue: What language, then? The Dutch, but...

Datz: They spoke Dutch, and the patois is Papiemento. It's a mixture of Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and English, a mish mash patois.

DePue: Well, what language did you guys end up speaking?

Datz: English. (laughter) Certainly the Jewish community, very fluent in a number of languages. They all spoke Dutch, Papiemento, Spanish, not much Portuguese, and English. They were very educated, widely traveled. Many of them were very well-to-do. They owned a lot of the well-known stores there—you know, merchants mostly—and traveled a lot to America, to Miami. Their English was good, so it wasn't a problem. You learn living on a little island that you need to get off every now and then if you can. We couldn't afford to go too often, but they do, because you get very island-bound.

DePue: Claustrophobic, again.

Datz: Well, it wasn't the claustrophobia of space but of just—you know what I mean? It's like, okay, I've seen it, I've done it, there's nowhere else to go. It takes some adjusting.

DePue: How close was Afrikaans to the Dutch dialect that would've been spoken there?

Datz: I can understand some Dutch from Afrikaans. It's not exactly the same, but you can certainly—and the more fluent you are in Afrikaans probably the better you are in Dutch, but there's similarities. I mean, I can pick up on words.

DePue: Okay. How well did you speak Afrikaans, then?

Datz: Not terribly well. You know, as I said, I learned it as a second language, so it was never that good. Living in Johannesburg, you never had to speak Afrikaans if you didn't want to, because everything was conducted in English. My Afrikaans was not great, and I didn't like it much, and it was associated with apartheid. The incentive to learn Afrikaans was not great, although people are very fond of it, and it can be a very descriptive language, like Yiddish. You know, there's a very descriptive element. But I never got to that point of loving it and appreciating it in its poetry and all that. Some people do. I mean, I don't deride that in any way. It's a legitimate language.

I couldn't work there, legally, so I scuba dived most of the time. (laughter) That's what I did. We made friends with some foreigners. There were expat clubs. There were American Women's Club and the British Women's Society, because there were a lot of foreigners in Curaçao working in the refineries and things. So I got to know a nice, wide range of people, from Ireland, from England, from Italy, and Americans who were seconded there for a year or two years. I fit in with them because we were all a little bit at a loose end, you know?

DePue: But it sounds like you had a good time while you were there.

Datz: Yeah. I don't think I would've wanted to live there forever. But we also, at the same time, were dealing with a little bit of anxiety, because we didn't know what was going to happen after the six months, so you couldn't just relax into it and, oh well, it'll be fine. It was like, well, where do we go when this is over because we didn't have a job?

DePue: Was the assumption that you'd end up in the United States, or—

Datz: Oh, yeah.

DePue: —you could go almost anywhere?

Datz: No, the intention was the United States. We did leave at one point; we took a vacation to America. Mike had a couple of interviews. We went to New York. He had an interview in Pittsburgh, and a couple of others, and none of them panned out. Then when it was time to leave Caraçao we went to Houston, because that's where his parents were, and we lived in Houston with them for six months, which was horrible. (laughter)

DePue: He didn't have a position at the time?

Datz: No. So that six months we were unemployed, doing whatever we could to earn some money, and living with his parents, which was hell on earth.

DePue: That would've been what year?

Datz: That was June '91 to January '92. Yeah, it was about six months, so the second half of '91. And it was tough. It was tough. I didn't like Houston. It was an ugly city. I was very unhappy. I visited my mother a couple times. She was living in Washington, D.C. I think I went back to South Africa, maybe. I don't know.

DePue: Were your parents divorced at that time?

Datz: Yeah, they had been divorced.

DePue: What brought your mother to the United States?

Datz: Oh, my mother had wanderlust. I don't know, she always wants to live somewhere else. So when we were younger she lived in Italy for a while, a couple of times went to Rome, and then I was already at university, I think, when she decided to come to the States. Then she lived here for seven years and then went back.

DePue: When you first left South Africa, was that really tough? Did you miss South Africa when you were in Curaçao?

Datz: Well, it was too soon, because we were still on an adventure. You know, it was six months. It was like, this is great, having this adventure in a Caribbean country. No, not at that point, but when we got to Houston... (laughter)

DePue: Then you missed South Africa!

Datz: Then I missed South Africa. Our port of entry was Miami. No, Puerto Rico. I entered South America in Puerto Rico as an alien, whatever you call it, and started the naturalization process. I had to be interviewed and approved in Curaçao at the American Embassy, and when we left they took my passport, and I only got it in Puerto Rico. So I was entering as a whole different basis. You know, here I was coming in as an immigrant. No, I missed South Africa, and I still do. But Houston was not a happy thing.

DePue: Primarily because of his being without a position—

Datz: Right.

DePue: —or was there some friction with his parents?

Datz: Yeah, no, it wasn't easy living with his parents. I don't think it ever is.

DePue: Had they come over to the wedding?

Datz: Yes, they had. That was the first time I met them, which is not a good way to do things. (laughter) I recommend you meet your in-laws and family before you decide to marry somebody, not at the wedding when it's a fait accompli.

DePue: Well, who had the bigger adjustment? Did they have a bigger adjustment getting used to you, or vice versa?

Datz: Oh, vice versa. Yes. Parents... I shouldn't say anything, but I'm not particularly close to them, let's put it that way. They came out before the wedding. It was hectic. We had his sister, and his parents came out, and Mike was showing them around the country, and his best friend and his wife and daughter came out as well, and we were showing them around, and it was a really exhausting time, taking them around the country **right before** our wedding. But it was a stressful time. You know, we were unemployed. We were living with his family. We lived in a city I didn't like. It was the ugliest place I'd ever seen.

DePue: Did you find a job? Were you able to look?

Datz: I did some temp stuff, office stuff, that sort of thing, and it wasn't great, but it brought in some money. Then we were at a party with someone in Houston, and they mentioned they had family in Jacksonville, Illinois, mentioned that the congregation in Springfield was looking for a rabbi, and so Mike called them. Now bear in mind, at this point we'd had a lot of conversations with the

rabbinic movement, what's called the CCAR, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and they represent—it's the rabbinic arm of the Reform movement. It's like a union, you know, for rabbis, and they helped place rabbis. It's not like the priesthood where you're sent places. I mean, you have a contract with a congregation, like any contract, but they help set it up. This congregation here was no longer a member of the CCAR. They hadn't paid their dues because there was some fallout or whatever, so they weren't helping them get a rabbi, you see. So Mike called them and said, "Look, you said we'd have no trouble getting a job. We're now six months and it's really getting hard. I'm going to apply for this, and you better not blackball me." They agreed, because they felt bad, because they really hadn't helped us much, and misrepresented the market, and things like that. So he contacted them directly, and they had an interview on the phone, they flew him up for an interview, then the second one they flew me and him up, and then they offered him a job. It was like, thank God. But we came here, like a lot of Jews who come here from other places, thinking we'll only be here two, three, four years. It's the Midwest, it's small, all that. And people—

DePue: Ugh, it's the Midwest, but as somebody from the Midwest, I want you to explain your views—

Datz: No, and... Absolutely. Well, one's view is the Midwest is sort of... You know, I don't know, it's not the coasts. It's sort of more the heartland, and one has a connotation, which I've since found is completely wrong. I like the Midwest. I like the Midwest people very much. I think they're the best. But Springfield has its limitations, and for two people who are from big cities and, you know, lived the life of a big city—

DePue: And you're both very well-traveled people.

Datz: And we're very well-traveled. A small town in the middle of Illinois, which is not that beautiful, was not high on one's list. Had we had our choices, it wouldn't have even featured. But also bear in mind, when he came here he'd only been a rabbi for a couple of years. The rules of the CCAR are such that you can only serve congregations of a certain size, depending on how many years you've been a rabbi. So every congregation wasn't open to him. It was rabbis of a certain size.

DePue: The rules of the C, did you say?

Datz: CCAR.

DePue: Oh, okay.

Datz: The rabbinic assembly. So he only qualified for certain congregation sizes anyway, and this was a small one. It was fine to start out with, but our intention was we'll move after a few years. You know, it's not the sort of city we want, it's not the size congregation you would stay with, and all that. We

kept hearing from people from Chicago or New York or St. Louis saying, "Yeah, we came here for three years, and thirty years later we're still here." We thought, That's not going to be us. (laughter) We've now been here twenty years.

DePue: And sounds like you have no immediate intentions of moving anywhere.

Datz: No. He's now been a rabbi for twenty-five years. He got his what's called a Doctor of Divinity, which they give to rabbis who've been in the... They jokingly call it a Doctor of Durability. It's an honorary doctorate for rabbis who've been in the rabbinate for twenty-five years, and he just got that this year.

DePue: Well, he entered the rabbinate as having a ton of school already.

Datz: Yes, which we're still paying for. (laughter)

DePue: How old was he when you got married? Is he older than you?

Datz: Yeah, he's seven years older than me. He was thirty-three when we got married. I was twenty-six. Thirty-two? Four, five, six—yeah, thirty-three. So he was an older rabbinic student. You know, he didn't go there straight from college.

DePue: Okay, let's put aside the whole thing about living with his parents for six months. Otherwise, what was the hardest thing for you to adjust to, now being in the United States as an immigrant in the United States?

Datz: America's funny, because it's very easy to live here. I mean, it's not a hard place to come. I mean, you're not coming to sweatshops. This wasn't my experience, and it isn't for many immigrants anymore, but I guess it can be, if you work in the fields in sharecropping or whatever. I came in with a level of education, and I could speak the language. America is, as we say, the Goldene Medina, the great country, so—

DePue: The Goldene Medina.

Datz: That's a Yiddish word, the golden world, the golden life, which is how they...

DePue: This would be similar to what the Protestants would call the Shining City on the Hill?

Datz: Yeah, exactly, exactly. It's funny, because America's like *cinema verite*, you know? It is like it looks in the movies. So it doesn't look alien. I'd traveled here before. It didn't feel unfamiliar, you know? But there are differences, and I'm foreign. I sound different, so you're always reminded every time you open your mouth, "Oh, where are you from?" You can never get away from that, unless you lose your accent, which I haven't. We just sort of got on with

living. Then as time goes on, the things you miss about—aside from family, of course; it's very hard to be apart from for a length of time. You know, after a while you start to appreciate. What you think you don't need when you leave at twenty-six—oh, it's fine—suddenly, no, it's not so fine. You're now going to see your family very infrequently, if at all. When you have children, everything changes, because suddenly they don't know their grandparents, and that's hard. Then as you get older you're dealing with aging parents, and you're not there to deal with some of the stuff. Then the climate was very hard for me—

DePue: In Houston, or here?

Datz: Here, here. Houston, fortunately, was a temporary thing. I mean, it's a terrible climate. (laughter) Here the winters are alien and harsh to me. The summers are hideous. The two nice times a year are spring and fall. Yeah, it's nice, but I find it very hard. I miss South Africa climate. I miss South African smells. I miss...

DePue: The smells? What smells?

Datz: You see? It's very hard to describe. South Africa is pungent. It's odiferous. It's full of smells, and you know how evocative smell is. You have a whiff of something that transports you back to your childhood, and think about that writ large in the whole continent. I remember reading a book about someone who grew up in South Africa, and they went away, and then they came back by boat, and the first thing that hit them was the smell of Africa. I know exactly what they mean. You smell the earth. The earth has a smell. The dryness has a smell. The impending rain has a smell. There's life, there's smell. You pick up a rock in Africa and there's bugs, and there's things going on. You pick up a rock here and there's nothing. You have beauty here, you do. There's no question about it. But there's no aroma that goes with it. There's no smell. It's very strange to me. The thing about South Africa is it's more accessible, because it's a smaller country, compared to America. It has everything, but it's closer. I mean, here, you want to go to mountains, you've got to travel, unless you live in them, obviously. You want to go to the beaches, you travel. It's far. It's not accessible. I miss that. I yearn for the bush, the game reserve, the smells. I go back to South Africa, and it's like a sense assault. I smell it the moment I get off the plane, and it transports me back. I miss it. I find it very hard to leave when I come back.

DePue: Was part of the smells the different foods that you had?

Datz: Oh, it's everything. It's everywhere. It's the people. It's the earth. It's just everything. Mostly it's the air around you, the sounds, the birds. I hear a turtledove and I could cry, because to me that's the sound of the bush. It was just things like that, which you don't expect when you leave, to hit you.

DePue: Does Michael have an appreciation for that, that it smells different?

Datz: Not really. No, he doesn't get it, really, because he didn't grow up with it. He liked South Africa, he enjoyed his time there, but he's moved on. He's not South African, and that's the fundamental difference.

DePue: Well, let's talk about diet a little bit. I have no idea what people eat in South Africa. I guess I have this notion that they're English, they eat similar diets to what we have, but...

Datz: Well, South Africa's a melting pot, too. I mean, you've got the African tribes, and you've got the Afrikaners, but within the white community there's Greeks, there's Portuguese, there's British, there's any number of European nationalities, all bring their food. There's a good and interesting food scene, and it's got better and better and better. Now, after apartheid, you've got Africans from all over Africa who've flooded there, from North Africa. You never used to see—sort of a lot of Zimbabweans and that. So it's a very lively, interesting food scene, like it is here, no different.

DePue: So that wasn't a big adjustment for you.

Datz: No, no. Well, I'll tell you what was in the food thing. First of all everything here is sweet, too sweet. The candy's too sweet. They put sugar in everything

here. Bread. You put sugar in bread! I mean, it's no wonder Americans are so fat. I don't know, the quantities of food I couldn't get over, but I'd seen this when I first came here. You know, you order a sandwich and there's like a quarter pound of meat between two pieces of bread. I've never seen such a thing. (laughter) So when I came to visit my mother we'd share everything, because the size of the sandwich is obscene. You'd share it. Then, of course, you get used to eating, so I first put on weight at the beginning. (laughter) I find American food huge—the portions are excessive. There's sugar in everything. Everything's too sweet. That's my assessment. But it's a lot of good food.

DePue: Well, I want to ask you next about—since you came from South Africa and the apartheid system there, as well, let's start off with your impressions of race relations in Houston in those few months that you were there, and then we'll talk about Springfield.

Datz: Well, in Houston you're very aware of a large Hispanic population, black and Hispanic. You realize there's race issues, very much, this is the South. This is Texas. You know, most of the people that do the labor are Hispanics there, and if you look at South Africa you think, Well, it ain't so different. You're on a border town with access to cheap labor, and there ain't too many differences. I think America has race issues, serious race issues. I think they don't talk about them, and it's got its own ugly past. But it's not apartheid. Came close in some places. But I can relate to the Southern experience. I think

the complexity of the interaction in the South is hard for people to understand, and I can see where there's a lot of hideousness and hatreds and terrible history there, but there's also a Southern thing that the blacks and the whites of the South share, you know what I mean? There's sort of a...

DePue: Well, I think you need to flesh it out a little bit for us.

Datz: Well, no, I mean... It strikes me, as I come from a country of apartheid, which is really the ultimate racial evil, and America has some pretty hideous racial past of its own, but the people in the South are intertwined in a way that South Africans were, black and white were intertwined. So there was this terrible oppression and racial injustice, but they were intertwined as people in this one country, and it's the same in the South. Whatever the hatreds and the histories in the past, they still were all Southerners. There was this relationship, often highly paternalistic, which also classifies a lot of the South African relationships—you know, that sort of thing. It was just—it's what it was. I don't know that I analyze it beyond these real racial issues here. We were concerned with our lives and trying to get on with it, but yeah, I saw racism around me, attitudes to Hispanics. Absolutely.

DePue: How about Springfield?

Datz: You know, I see... You see, I have a different... I mean, people come here and say, "Oh, Springfield's terribly segregated, and the east side, and this side," and I guess it is. I look at the east side, I see whites living there, as well. I see homes that are not bad. You know, there's poor areas, black and white, modest homes, nicely looked after, some not nicely looked after. My reference point for poverty is very different from an American's. What Americans call poor comes nowhere close to African poor. So my feeling is, people are very fortunate to be Americans and be born in America, with or without their past.

DePue: I want to ask a few questions, then. Now, you're observing what's going on in South Africa, I'm assuming.

Datz: Yes.

DePue: From a distance.

Datz: Yes, and that was very hard, because I wanted very much to be a part of it. You know, here comes a time I never thought I'd see in my lifetime. Apartheid's ending. There's free and fair elections for the first time. I mean, it was very hard for me to be apart from that, and I really, really wished we would be there then. I wish we were still living there through it. I think, in retrospect, if I'm honest with myself—because I did go through a phase of I want to go back, I don't want to be here, I want to go back, that's where I care about, it's my home...

DePue: Would that have been at the time that these changes were really accelerating?

Datz: Part of it's that, and afterwards. But I think in reality, if I'm honest with myself, we would've left anyway, probably a little later, a few years later, but probably because the violence and crime became very bad, and that's when you saw an uptick in emigration by a lot of white South Africans, Jews and non-Jews. I might have been willing to live with it. My sister still has and still is, but a lot of their friends left. I'm not sure Mike would've. You know, as an American, I don't think he would've willingly hung around saying, "I need to feel committed to being here through all of this," and he would've pushed to move, and I would've had a hard time saying no, because one's life was—we were fearful of real, serious crime.

DePue: The serious crime, is that something that happened during the end of apartheid, or after the end?

Datz: Well, after the end. Look, the end of apartheid didn't come peacefully. I mean, everyone thinks it was a peaceful transition, and relatively it was, but there was some major violence, mostly black on black, in two areas: one was in the black townships—there was a lot of violence, tribal violence—and in KwaZulu-Natal, which at the time was just Natal. The governments, the ANC, African National Congress, is predominantly Xhosa tribe, and Natal is Zulu. They were lobbying for power, and there was a civil war. I mean, a lot of people were killed in the most brutal way, Xhosas, Zulus. So it wasn't without violence. After apartheid, it sort of spread into urban crime, and general crime and disorder, and blacks, whites, everybody. It still is. There's a lot of crime still. So I suspect we would've left, but it probably would've been later. If I was married to a South African, committed to staying, I might've seen it through. Might not have. But I know with Mike I wouldn't have. So that's the truth of it.

DePue: Okay. How many times have you been back to South African since you've been here?

Datz: Quite a few. In twenty years I've probably been back eight to ten times, maybe. Which is fortunate. I mean, I do think of that—as an immigrant... Certainly, for my father there was no going back. Not only can we Skype and we can email, I can travel back. It's wonderful. I'm very fortunate. But it sometimes makes it harder, because leaving is terrible. Saying each goodbye is terrible. It's disruptive, because I come back in a terrible funk.

DePue: Your father, is he still alive?

Datz: He's still alive. He's not great. He's suffering from dementia. I mean, he's functioning, but his short-term memory is not good. He's eighty-four, in okay health, but, as I said, the worst is his memory is not good. He lives in Cape Town with my stepmother, who has just been diagnosed with Parkinson's, and she's just seventy years old. I think she just turned seventy-one. They will be

moving up to Johannesburg in the next four months, six months, to be close to a retirement facility and be close to my sister.

DePue: Are you closer now to your mother or your father, then?

Datz: Well, both. I mean, it waxes and wanes. I mean, my mother is still competent and compos mentis. He's compos mentis, but he's not going to remember five minutes after I've spoken to him that I've spoken to him, so it's not that easy. I'm very close... I'm close to all of them. I'm close to my stepmother, as well. I feel really very, very bad that I'm not there to help with all of this, that it falls on my sister, which it does. I feel bad about that. I feel bad that I saw my mother more over the years, 'cause she lived here for a while. She also traveled here a few times. My father might've come once in all the time I've been here. So when I think of it, I've seen my father and stepmother one week every few years, and it's terrible. It's sad. I hate it. That upsets me terribly, you know.

DePue: When you came here, tell us about the Jewish community here in Springfield.

Datz: It's what it is now. It's diminished a little bit since we first arrived. It has lost some people. It's small. It's always been around a thousand Jews. There are a few native born, but many have come from elsewhere—Chicago, St. Louis, New York, whatever—for jobs, and stayed, not thinking they would. There are two congregations, the Reform and the Conservative. The Reform is slightly larger than the Conservative. It's an old congregation. The one we're at is Temple B'rith Sholom. It's the Reform one, and it's over 150 years old. It's a beautiful, historic building. It's a very warm, welcoming, active community. The irony is—well, not irony, just what it is is if you want to have a Jewish community here, you affiliate, because there isn't this Jew-by-osmosis thing. You know, you live in Chicago or you live in New York where there are large Jewish populations, you feel a sense of Jewishness and Yiddishkeit, all these delis, or whatever it is that you feel makes you Jewish. It ain't here. So to have a sense of Jewish community, you have to get involved and participate. Some people don't, but it's a high affiliation rate. Because there are so few Jews, every Jew counts, so you're really embraced, and you're really brought in. And when I first came here I reacted against that, because my thing was, okay, I've married a rabbi, but I'm not the rabbi's wife. I'm not taking on that whole role. I'm not interested. This is his thing, not mine. When I came here, the difference was in South Africa, I was who I was. I was Josephine Gon before I met him. I wasn't the rabbi's wife. I had a life, I had friends that had nothing to do with him. But when we came here, we came as Michael and Josephine Datz. I was the rabbi's wife.

They sucked me in, (laughter) and I—whoa. Then I realized they do that with every Jew. It wasn't just me. It's everyone. They want you involved. I sort of got over that, and I thought, I understand, and I got involved. But it's been very much on my terms, I guess up to a point. I haven't by and large

done things I didn't want to, and I've kept very much my own person up to a point. I mean, being a rabbi's wife is a very public position. It's very much you've got to be nice to everybody and all that sort of thing. But I've tried to maintain my own self. I don't know. I worked. I worked for AFSCME, and I had a job that had nothing to do with the congregation or the Jewish community. It's a good community. It's a wonderful community, and it's part of the reason we're still here. My husband's very happy as a rabbi here. They appreciate him very much. They like him. While it has limitations of size in terms of what things he'd like to do—he's never wanted to be a rabbi to these huge, 2,000-family congregations. He thinks that's just awful. A little bigger would be nice from a financial point of view, from resources to do things, because it's always a bit of a struggle, but he's very happy here. He loves it. He feels very grateful to this community for taking him on when we needed a job.

DePue: Well, you've eluded to this a couple of times: what was it about Springfield that surprised the two of you? Or the Midwest, maybe, in general?

Datz: Surprised us? Well, that it was a much nicer place to be than we thought it would be.

DePue: Well, you've already talked about the weather wasn't exactly your idea of—

Datz: Yeah, no, well that... I'm trying to think—surprised in a good way, or you want surprised in a bad way? (laughter) You know what happens is life happens. You make friends, and you make a life. We bought a house, and we thought we'd spend more time in St. Louis or Chicago because of the big city, and you find you don't. You make friends and you get on with it, and you build a nice home, and then we had kids, and suddenly there you are, and it's still not **necessarily** what you want, the sort of city you would choose, but there's a certain quality of life. The cost of living's lower, and you don't sit in traffic, and as you get older you appreciate that more and more. Then I realized most of America is a lousy climate, so what are you going to do? (laughter)

DePue: Yeah, and we're sitting in here, and the temperature's supposed to hit about 101 today—

Datz: It's a hundred! (laughter)

DePue: —and it's been like that for over a week, I think.

Datz: Exactly. Yeah.

DePue: Okay. How long did you work for AFSCME? And I'm trying to—I should know the acronym...

Datz: American Federation—

DePue: Federation of—

Datz: —State, County, and Municipal Employees.

DePue: Okay, I got the S and the C mixed up.

Datz: Yeah. When I came here, of course, I was looking for a job, and my background was labor relations. Put my name out there, asked as many people for help getting a job as I could. Couldn't get one in the state. A member of the Jewish community worked for AFSCME, and they interviewed me, and I got a job. I worked there for around three years, until I had my first child, and I stopped work for a while.

DePue: Okay, and that was Nathan?

Datz: That was Nathan, yeah.

DePue: Okay, what year was that?

Datz: Nineteen ninety-five.

DePue: And you have another child?

Datz: Yeah, Geoffrey, with a G, and he was born in September '98, almost three years later.

DePue: So your children are old enough to make some comparisons between the education you got growing up and the education they're getting.

Datz: Yes.

DePue: How would you compare that?

Datz: I'm not terribly impressed. (laughter) Well, let's say I have concerns about the American education system. I really do. First of all, the no wearing of uniforms, which as a child I thought was marvelous about America; I didn't have to wear uniforms, because I hated wearing school uniforms. I now see the value of school uniforms, and I think they should do them here. They should have them here.

DePue: Because?

Datz: Because I think it's a leveling, an equalizer. I think it reflects an attitude to your studies and your school when you look decent. It doesn't have to be a horrible English-style pinafore, like I had to wear a tie and a hat, and I learned to tie ties there. It can be comfortable and nice and casual, but I think everyone needs to look alike. You won't have this huge distinction of who's wearing what and who's got the latest this and that and who doesn't. I think it

brings a certain respect. When you see the way some kids dress, it's appalling. I think your dress shows a certain level of self-worth and respect for the people you're with, and I think it's important, and I think it's a mistake not to have it. I tried to change that, but I've learned things don't change so easily in America. A few things I've tried to change.

I also tried to change this school calendar, which, of course, I'll never succeed in doing, this insanely long summer vacation that was built around the farming, which the kids—I think we talked about this—kids don't, or most of them in this area are not farming. I think it's crazy. I think there's a problem of low expectations here. There's not enough expectation of kids. This notion of everybody's special and everybody's a winner has pervaded everything, so no one's special. The kids think they are, but they really aren't. I think there's too much teaching to the average and the lowest common denominator, unless you're in the really top stream and you're probably okay. I worry that the kids come out unable to do research, to write, to read, to speak properly. I think it's unbelievable what some kids come out of school, their capacity. It's unbelievable to me. I mean, they cannot string two sentences together, let alone write. Spelling... They don't emphasize spelling here! Just do what you like. So they're inadequate spellers. I am appalled, actually, if you want to know the truth.

DePue: (laughter) The more you talked about it the worse it sounded.

Datz: That's part of it. Now, there are obviously schools and there are schools, and I think there's a terrible inequity in the schooling system here. I think the funding for it is fundamentally wrong, where you rely on property taxes, because the wealthy areas are always going to have better schools. I don't believe in equal outcomes, but I believe in equal opportunities, and I think that's not the case.

DePue: Are your children going to public schools?

Datz: Yeah.

DePue: Have you flirted with the notion of sending them to private schools?

Datz: There aren't any for us in this community, because they're all religious-based.

DePue: So sending them to a Catholic or a Lutheran school wouldn't be part of the equation for you?

Datz: No. Well, Geoffrey went to a Lutheran preschool for a little while, and that was fine. I mean, we're secure enough that they'll know who they are, Jewishly, but I think it would be a little much. Look, the Rabbi's sending his kids to Catholic school. (laughter) I'm not convinced the education's any better. It's religious-based, but it doesn't make it better. I'm concerned about the testing.

DePue: Okay, here's a different question; this is just for my curiosity, more than anything else. Why do the Reform have temples, and the Conservatives and I guess the Orthodox have synagogues?

Datz: Well, some Conservatives have temples, too, because Temple Israel here is the Conservative, as well. They have taken that on, as well. I think the reason was they don't believe that original temples in Jerusalem are ever going to be restored, which many Orthodox do; there'll be a time when the temples will be rebuilt. So these are little temples. They're little versions of the temple in Jerusalem that are never going to be... But the Orthodox reject that, and they call them synagogues.

DePue: Okay.

Datz: I think that's it, something like that.

DePue: You grew up fairly involved in politics. You already expressed that you really missed not being in South Africa when the end of the apartheid system occurred so that you could've been involved with that whole process.

Datz: Right. Or at least part of it. How involved, I don't know, but just to be there, to see it, to witness it.

DePue: So now for the last twenty-some years, you've been living in Springfield, the capital of the State of Illinois. Your impression of politics as it's practiced here, and maybe in the United States in general.

Datz: Look, I'm a big fan of America. I think it's a wonderful country. I think it is a shining example to the world. I think it is special, and it has a unique particularism. I think there's a terrible disdain for America amongst certain Americans, which drives me crazy, because it can only come from never having lived anywhere else or opened their eyes to the rest of the world. It doesn't mean to say not be critical of things, and absolutely. That's part of what makes this country great. But there is, in some quarters, a hatred that is undeserved.

Its founding is, to me, a remarkable thing. I mean, the whole notion of what is America, and how it's the founding fathers of the Constitution is an incredible thing. So I'm a big fan. I mean, I think America's a wonderful place with a wonderful guiding philosophy. You know, its politics, not always the best. I don't know what the alternative is. I think Illinois is just... I don't know. Terrible. (laughter) It is just in such a bad way. I'm not sure how they're ever going to get out of it.

DePue: Well, we should mention as we're sitting here—and I don't know how years later somebody might be listening to this—but Illinois at present is rated as the worst pension system. The public pension system is the worst in the country, and people are trying to figure out how we're ever going to fix it, and

at least for the last several years the politicians have always been able to defer it 'til next year.

Datz: Right, and use the funds for the pensions for other things, right? Haven't they? I learned—when I started with AFSCME—bear in mind, my background was private sector, unionism, management base, you know, and I came here, and I worked for a public sector union in Illinois. So it was a huge—I learned a lot about state government by working at AFSCME. So that was interesting. That was very interesting. I learned a lot about American unionism, because public sector unionism is the only area of growth in unionism.

You know, American unionism in the private sector's declined precipitously, except in the public sector. And, of course, we're now seeing the consequences of that. Much as I'm sympathetic to unions and unionism, I see where it's absolutely leading to the destruction of many states, because the difference between public sector and private sector is when you're sitting down and negotiating in private sector, you're negotiating with owners of the business, about their resources, and how they're going to spend their resources. When you're negotiating in the public sector, the people opposite the union are not negotiating with their money. They're negotiating with the taxpayers' money. There's no recourse to them. They have really nothing to lose. It's insidious because it sets a level for their level of management in the hope that because the union gets this they will eventually get a better deal. It's terribly corrosive, and it's fundamentally wrong, and what you end up with is a situation where state employees have benefits that very few in the private sector can match. I think that the citizens are saying, "Hang on, this is our money. This is not right." Now, I understand from a public sector employee this is, you know, not their fault. I absolutely believe that if something was negotiated and that's how you've worked on the basis of this is your pension, it's got to be honored, but that's what's led us to where we are now. It's these huge, huge debt obligations, with the taxpayers' money.

DePue: Well, speaking of taxpayers' money, you've got a parking meter that's probably about ready to expire. (laughter)

Datz: Oh, right, okay. I'm actually okay until 11:30.

DePue: Oh.

Datz: Do you want to carry on?

DePue: Yeah, absolutely, and I think we might be able to finish in that case.

Datz: I put it in... Okay. No, a little after 11:30. I'm okay.

DePue: Okay. Well, I wanted to change the discussion now to Israel a little bit, because I think that's also a part of your identity. You mentioned, also, your father would consider himself a Zionist?

Datz: Yeah, I think we all were. I mean, my mother and my father, we all were very big supporters of Israel. Bear in mind they lived through the war, and they lived through the independence of Israel, and this was a miracle. This was 2,000 years in the making. I've always been a supporter of Israel more or less; different times, different events happening I've felt less or more of a connection in one way or the other. But more so now, partly because of the work I do.

DePue: Well, let's mention that here. I was going to get to that later, but the work you do now, what is it?

Datz: Okay. This was, you know... (laughter) I've got to preface it by saying I never imagined I'd marry a rabbi, and I never imagined I'd then become a professional Jew, which I am now. I'm a paid professional in the Jewish community. But when I stopped working, when I had children, I would help every now and again at the Federation office, the Jewish Federation.

DePue: Jewish Federation of...?

Datz: Well, it was called the Springfield Jewish Federation for many years. It's recently changed its name to the Jewish Federation of Springfield, Illinois. That's semantics, but it's to fit in with the national organization. That's semantics, but I can tell you what it's about. But anyway, I use to help there. Then I started working one day a week there, and then I went back part-time and worked as a part-time as the program director, and I was there for—excuse me—like five years, and I just sort of stayed. Then I became executive director in 2010.

DePue: When did you first start to work there, then?

Datz: When I was off with kids, so it was probably 1995, '96 or '97. Just very part-time, one day a week, that sort of thing. The day my husband was off, I could leave him with the kids. But I started there part-time, permanent part-time, in '94.

DePue: What's the—

Datz: In between I did other things. I started a business.

DePue: What was the business?

Datz: I had two businesses. One, I started a company called Repartea, which was serving traditional English teas in people's homes. Yeah, I did the whole thing. I made traditional scones and cakes and teas, and tell people about tea, and how to serve a proper cup of tea, because Americans don't know how to drink tea. I did that for a while. It was tough, a lot of work. Then I was working at the Federation, as well. Then I started another job. I started importing kids' clothes from South Africa for a while, and I did that for a

number of years, while working for Federation. So I was running ragged at that time. I dropped the tea thing and ended that. Then the clothes thing reached a point where I either needed to really invest way more time and money or not, and I decided I didn't want to go that way, and I sold the business.

DePue: Did you see a niche in South African clothing in America?

Datz: Yeah, I did. There were a couple of companies in South Africa the last few years that produced just the most gorgeous South African kids' clothing. It's become quite a thing. Just lovely fabrics, lovely design, something you wouldn't see here. So here it's a lot of clothes, or many versions of adult clothes, and there they're kids' clothes, and they're just sweet and whimsical and charming, and well made. It also turns out that there's no duty on fabrics imported from Africa at the moment, so it was a good thing to do. I tried that, and I had a website, and I sold on the website. It was called Zooloo Trading Company, Z-o-o-l-o-o.

DePue: Oh, a different kind of Zulu.

Datz: Yeah. (laughter)

DePue: Very...

Datz: Well, more childlike. But then I dropped that and just went for Jewish route. (laughter)

DePue: What is the purpose, then, of the Springfield Jewish Federation?

Datz: Okay. They exist pretty much in a lot of Jewish countries. In South Africa, it's a Zionist organization called the Zionist Fed, Zionist Federation, that would raise money for Israel. In America, pretty much in most Jewish communities around the country there's a Jewish Federation—not all, but many. It's the nonreligious arm of the Jewish community, so you don't have to be religious, you don't have to be... It's not the temples. It's the communal aspect of it. Now, in the large cities where there are a lot of Jews it's much bigger, wealthier federations, it's a fundraising organization that funds and supports the Jewish community, and raises money for Jews around the world in need.

DePue: So a charity organization.

Datz: It's a charity organization. It's a nonprofit. In some of the very big cities, they had agencies. They have homes for senior, old age homes. They might fund hospitals. They might fund welfare agencies for children and kids. That's part of what they did, and it's part of what Jews do wherever they go. They build hospitals. They build their own schools. They take care of their own. Its guiding philosophy is we take care of our own people, because history has taught us that if we don't, no one else will. That's the philosophy. In certain

periods of history, it helped repatriate Jews from countries in danger. They helped bring Jews out of Russia to America, to Israel. For the first time in history, there are no Jews around the world who are not free to leave the countries they're in. They won't necessarily leave on good situation, but they're free to leave. There are a few areas in the world where we watch and we're careful and make sure people are safe. Recently there was a group from Yemen who left because they were being killed. But that's what we do. So it's a combination of our own Jewish community, Jews in need around the world, and helping develop the state of Israel. It's changed over the years as the needs have changed. Israel's become a wealthier country, but we helped support needy people in Israel. It's not a political thing. We don't support the government of the day; we support the needy people, whether it's bringing Ethiopian Jews in, helping resettle Russians, helping resettle anybody, helping—there's a growing rift of wealth levels in Israel. It used to be a more egalitarian thing. It's now very rich and poorer people. The social consequence, social problems, which we help fund. In Springfield, because we're a small community, we don't have any social service agencies. We provide mostly cultural and educational services to our community. So we make it a community, together with—

DePue: So the money you raise stays in the community?

Datz: Not all of it. Some of it does, for programming here, and we have a social worker on staff, and we have a kosher lunch program for seniors once a week, and we bring speakers and that sort of thing. Part of our money goes overseas, and it can go to—we have three overseas agencies that the moneys go to. One is the American Jewish Joint Distribution Agency, which has been, for over a hundred years, JDC—they rescue Jews around the world. They help bring people out. They help support people who stay. At the moment, part of the mandate is there are some very poor elderly Jewish widows in Russia, former Soviet Union, who, but for the food and the assistance they get from the JDC, would be living in absolute squalor. They help with rescue of Jews, and they also do humanitarian assistance anywhere in the world, whether it's the tsunami, Haiti, that sort of thing. They, with the Israeli government, are very good at going in and providing crisis relief.

DePue: So in that case—

Datz: Non-Jewish.

DePue: Oh, non-Jewish.

Datz: To anybody. It's not a Jewish thing exclusively. Then there's the Jewish Agency for Israel, also very old organization, that operates within Israel, also helps with resettlements of Jews and integration to society, and issues within Israel. Then World ORT, which is a technical school. I don't know if you've heard of ORT; they do wonderful work all over the world.

DePue: O-R-T?

Datz: O-R-T. I don't know what it stands for.

DePue: Is it an acronym?

Datz: I think it is originally, but it's now so known as ORT, I don't know anyone knows what the acronym is. But it's a technical school. They go and they set up schools. Mostly they're non-Jews now, around the world. They open them everywhere. Most of the people are not Jewish. There's one in South Africa, wonderful school, Argentina, Russia. They're all over. They give kids an opportunity and an education that they wouldn't get elsewhere, and that's what we support. So we run fundraising campaigns.

DePue: Well, what direction do I go here? (laughter) We started this by talking about Israel, and I know you've traveled there several times. The family has, I assume, a couple times, and taken the kids there?

Datz: Yeah, we took them there the first time in 2009. My oldest son had his bar mitzvah that year, and we felt that instead of having a big party we'd go to Israel as a family, and we did. We rented a car and traveled all over—north, south, east, west.

DePue: Okay. I know the question I wanted to ask before we get to talking more about Israel and world politics, perhaps. What's the status of the larger Jewish community in the United States? How would you characterize that?

Datz: Gosh, that's a whole conversation. (laughter)

DePue: Well—

Datz: It's a big question.

DePue: When I first heard you make a presentation, the thing that struck me was your comment—and I don't like to put words in people's mouths, but this was your comment—is "This is, like, the first time in world history that the Jews have been..." I think you even used the word "liked."

Datz: Yeah.

DePue: That they liked us.

Datz: You see, that's it. Our problem and our blessing is that we always say the non-Jews love us now, because it's never been in the history a time when the non-Jews loved us. There's been moments, and then... (makes "pshh" sound) You know, they were very settled in England before they were expelled. They were settled in Spain before they were expelled. They were very German and Italy before, you know... So we jokingly say they like us. They marry us. You

know, huge intermarriage rate: 50 percent or more of the American Jews are intermarried, which has consequences for how the children are raised, whether they see themselves Jewish or not. They've assimilated. They're accepted. I mean, within the last sixty, seventy years since World War II, the status of American Jews is phenomenal. I mean, I don't know how many Americans know just how much discrimination there was against Jews in the early years. There were quota systems. There were quotas to go to universities. There were quotas in jobs. There were a lot of restrictions, a lot of clubs and things where Jews couldn't go. I mean, this was well into the ;'50s and '60s. So it's come a long way. I mean, to say that assimilation and intermarriage is a problem is not quite right, because it has challenges, but I'd rather have this than what one had before. So the Jewish community is accepted, is, I think, extraordinarily successful, given its numbers, very organized, very politically organized. It's the most organized community I've ever seen in my life. I mean, boy, Jews know how to organize around an issue. There are more Jewish organizations representing Jews. It's unbelievable. So it's an amazing community doing amazing things. Doing amazing things. I mean, it's the largest **Diaspora** community in the world, of course. I mean, outside of Israel, 90 percent of the world's Jews are in America.

DePue: Ninety percent?

Datz: Absolutely. There are only 13 million Jews in the world, and the world's obsessed with them. There are Jews in the former Soviet Union, South Africa, England, France, pockets of Europe, pockets of South America, but very few, comparatively. I'd say 80 90 percent are in America. So it's a very powerful, important community, and the relationship with Israel is important. Israel's dependence on America and America's support is huge, and what American Jews think about Israel is important, too. Even though they don't live there and they don't vote there, they have an influence. They help finance it. There's a strain, at times, between the ultra-Orthodox that tend to control a lot of the Jewish life in Israel, and American Jews, who are anything but ultra-Orthodox. So there's sometimes issues there.

DePue: Even Orthodox American Jews don't fit into that category of the kind of ultra-Orthodox you see—

Datz: No, they do. Oh, they do. You have the same here as there.

DePue: But is that a minor percentage of the Jewish population in the US?

Datz: It's less so in the US, but they're growing, because they have huge families. So they are growing, but the majority are in Israel, and they have huge power, unfortunately, in my view.

DePue: So part of the interviews with immigrants is the whole identity issue, and sounds like are you, like most Jews, or a lot of Jews, identify very strongly not just with South Africa but with Israel, as well.

Datz: Yeah. And I guess it evolved over time, because I went through a time in my life where I was South African. I was Jewish. I was South African. I wasn't interested... I certainly wasn't Zionist in the sense that I was going to move to Israel. Now you can be a Zionist. I mean, technically Zionism meant you went to Israel. I mean, I never contemplated going to live in Israel, unless I absolutely have to, I guess, I might, but it wasn't something I was going to do. I didn't believe in it, that I have to be there. I don't believe that every Jew has to be in Israel. I think it's important to have a Diaspora. I think it's important... You know, don't put all your eggs in one basket. (laughter) But I think Diaspora Jews bring different things, and I think it's important. So I never felt guilty about not moving there, but I see myself... Yeah, I'm a bit of a dichotomy, because I still see myself as South African. I'm American, too. I've been living here for twenty years or more. I feel at home here. But I feel very much at home in South Africa, too. I'm a supporter of Israel. A lot of my work is around Israel advocacy, and raising funds and support for Israel, and we face a very big challenge right now. I mean, it always is. It's one crisis after another after another. You've got files in the office, Israel crisis, Israel crisis, Israel crisis. (laughter) Now there's a whole new challenge to Israel, and it's an important part of what we do, because we believe that it deserves to **exist**.

DePue: If you look at world history in the last one hundred years, the Jews and Israel seem to be at the center of much of it, and maybe a lot of people would think that the situation in the Middle East right now is about as intractable as you can imagine.

Datz: Well, you see, the thing is that Israel... I don't know why they're considered the center of everything, because the world makes it that way, you know? We're a small people. We haven't... Unfortunately, the history of anti-Semitism has always made us a bigger deal than we should be. This obsession with Israel, the Middle East, as I would hope anybody can see, is not only about Israel. Take Israel out of the equation and there's still a mess, right? The Arab Spring, every country is a totalitarian nightmare of oppression, of illiteracy, of horror and poverty, and not much else, and oil, and money, and power, disproportionate to the societies that they run. Hatreds and tribalism and Persian, Arab, this tribe, that tribe, territorial disputes that nobody ever hears about or talks about, and that's without Israel. Take Israel out, it's a bloody mess. But the whole world's obsession is about the Israeli/Palestinian problem—not to say it's not a problem, but not to say it should be any bigger than any other problem and dispute in anywhere else in the world. This is the world's obsession with Jews and with Israel that is never, ever going away, and what's happened now is the narrative has changed but the facts have not. The facts are there is a double standard dealt to Israel that no other country on

Earth is faced with, and that is a fact. There is an obsession in the United Nations. There are more resolutions against Israel than any other country on Earth, and we're talking Korea, half of Africa. Wherever there are human rights abuses, and they are legion, there is no comment. Nobody gives a damn. They don't care because they're black. They don't care because they're Korean. I don't know what it is. But when it's Jews and it's Israel, it's like Israel is held to a higher standard than any other country on Earth. Why is that? Why is that? It's not all about the Palestinians, I can tell you that now, because the Palestinians are treated like crap by their own people. They are Arabs. They are Arabs from Jordan, they are Arabs from Egypt, and none of those countries accept them. None of them help them. None of them integrated them. They are treated like second-class citizens when they live in Jordan or Lebanon. They do not have the same rights. Nobody cares. Nobody cares. History is being written, and the new anti-Semitism in the world is anti-Israel, because when you can move from just criticism of a society to outright condemnation that nothing it does is right, nothing it does is good, it never has a right to protect itself and defend its citizens, the delegitimization—this is the new movement—the delegitimizing Israel's right to exist, that Jews have no right to a homeland, that they have no right to a homeland in Israel, that Zionism is racism is the... It's a resolution in the UN. You are saying that Israel has no right to exist. That goes beyond criticism of Israel, and that is what we are facing now.

DePue: You grow up in a country and a society that was, for many years, considered a pariah by the rest of the world.

Datz: And this is what offends me. This is what offends me, because not only are they trying to turn Israel into South Africa, they're using the same language and the same tactics. They call Israel an apartheid state. They are trying the same techniques of disinvestments, of boycotts, of sanctions, because they think it worked in South Africa. It offends me so deeply, because I know what apartheid was. This is not apartheid. But it's a very clever tactic, it's a clever slogan, and it gives them some sort of—cloaked in some sort of morality. It's an offense I can't even begin to tell you. Israel is a liberal democracy. It's the only one in the Middle East. It is a liberal democracy that has maintained itself as a democracy through never having a day's peace. Many societies suspend constitutions and democracies and impose martial law and impose emergency rule, which South Africa did. So Israel has never done it. You know, the wall, the "apartheid wall", was only put up to keep out terrorists and mass murderers who blew up people. That is the duty of any government is to protect its citizens.

DePue: You called it the "apartheid wall."

Datz: Well, that's how it's called by the people in—

DePue: You're talking about the wall that Israel has built within the last few years.

Datz: Right. And it's a fence. I've seen it. There's very few places it's actual wall. It's a fence with a sort of sand on either side, no man's land. It can be taken down. The objections have gone to the Supreme Court that have ordered them to move it at times. The point is it was only put up in response to terrorism, and if you look at the statistics, they have gone from horrifying figures to zero. It worked. Let me tell you, any country would do the same thing. A million countries around the world have lines and fences and borders, but nobody talks about that. It's a terrible situation. It's a miserable life for many Palestinians. For many, it's not. Many of the areas of the Palestinian authority are doing very nicely, thank you. The economic growth in the West Bank is greater than any other Arab country. That's ignored.

The point is, Israel has made peace with all its neighbors who are willing to make peace with it. It's made painful concessions for peace, and it wants nothing but peace. The trouble is they don't have a partner in peace. One can debate that until the cows come home, but the world does not like to see a Jew with a gun. I'm convinced of it. Jews are fine when they're a nice little oddity. You know, oh, there are a few of them left. But when they defend themselves, that is intolerable to the world. Let me tell you, that ain't gonna change, because Jews have learned very much the hard way. They're not going to rely on anybody else to look after them and defend them, and they are not going to go to their death ever again.

DePue: Well, that gets us back to the United States is this unique partner with Israel, at least historically, for the last fifty-some years.

Datz: Yeah.

DePue: There was that one partner, and there was a few other countries that would ally themselves occasionally, as well.

Datz: Right. No, look, America has been a marvelous friend—thank God—and I think Americans understand that. You know, it's changed with different presidents, and more or lesser or more extent, and better and not, but I think the Congress has always been behind Israel, and that's the most important thing. This is why the Jewish community is very politically active, because they know if they want Israel to survive they need America. Israel knows it needs America. What the world is less aware of is how much Israel gives to America. You know, you get people complaining about how much foreign aid is given to Israel. It's the one country that was given foreign aid that is required to spend it all back in America. So it benefits America. They just give money to the Egyptians, the Palestinians, or whatever, without any requirement of likewise. America's provided military help to Israel, but Israel has developed all sorts of technologies that are helping the American Army, and saving lives of American soldiers. They have developed a bulletproof thing that is literally saving lives now in Iraq and Afghanistan. They've taken logical advances, are helping humanity. You use a cell phone, it's Israeli

technology. Medically advanced beyond anywhere else. It's got more startup companies than any other country in the world after America. More books are published after than any country after America. You know, a little country, eight million people, has eleven or fourteen Nobel Prize winners. It's contributed to humanity, and nobody can tolerate it. And it makes me furious.

DePue: And you speak about it with great passion. Let me ask you in the context—this is very much in the context, I think—do you remember what you were doing when you heard about 9/11?

Datz: Oh, absolutely.

DePue: Tell me about that.

Datz: Okay, I was walking. It was early morning, a beautiful day, in September, I think the same weather they were having in New York, and I was walking the dog. Or did we have a dog? I think I was just walking, (laughter) in the morning. I heard on the radio—I was listening to the radio—that a small plane had gone into one of the Trade Towers. I came into the kitchen. My mother was visiting. I turned on the TV, and I saw the tower in flames and I'm watching as the other plane goes in, and that moment you realize this was attack. It was the most horrifying day of my life. I mean, well, I've had other horrifying days in a different level, but this was—we watched, riveted, and watching this, and then saw it collapse, and it was just horrifying. I will never forget watching TV, and it was Bill O'Reilly, who I didn't know who he was. I didn't watch Fox News; it was a first time. It was the first time that he was on. He said, "Today we're all Israelis." I thought, Ah, somebody finally gets it. It was a wonderful thing to hear. You saw Israelis mourning, condoling, consoling. They've put up a 9/11 memorial in Israel. They were horrified and shocked. In the streets of the Palestinians, they were cheering and dancing with glee. I thought surely the world can see what this comes down to. I thought, Finally, they're going to get it. They're going to realize the threats, what is out there. But I'll never forget that day. I remember it vividly. My mother went on to New York shortly after that and went down to Ground Zero, as far as she could. That was just a few weeks later. Horrifying. It was the awakening of America.

DePue: Put that in the context, then, if you could, what you've been talking about with the world's understanding about Israel and Jews in general, and now the United States involved in what we've been calling the War on Terror.

Datz: Right. Well, you see, what happened was I think there was a uniquely American response to world events. Americans start to say, What did we do wrong? What did we do to cause this? It's very much a "We must be at fault" instead of saying, "Who are these people, and what the hell have they done to us, and how dare they?" You know, it turned into... And what it's led to, I fear, is a terrible political correctness, a terrible bending over backwards to

say it's not, you know—and now, with this administration that won't define terrorism as Islamic fascism. They won't call it what it is. How do you fight an enemy when you won't name it properly? Terrible, terrible... You know, I thought Americans can't ever forget 9/11. They need to understand what's at stake here. But oh, lo and behold, they have. They have forgotten, and they get reminded every once in a while, but they're bent over so backwards to try and be politically correct and non-offensive that you can't say anything about Islamic fascism. We're not talking about Islam. We're not talking about nice, moderate Islam, Muslims. We're talking about Islamic fascism, Islamism, Islamic terrorism, whatever. It's a force in the world, and it's real. I think the trouble and the charm of Americans is they see everything from an American perspective. Why do they hate us? How can they hate us? How can they hate us? We're so nice. We like people. We're tolerant. They think everybody else is. They're incapable of seeing thing the way they are, and it's not as nice out there as it is here.

DePue: So it's both the thing that you find charming about Americans and—

Datz: Yeah, and infuriating.

DePue: —infuriated.

Datz: Yeah. (laughter)

DePue: Well, shortly after 9/11 occurred, the dialogue started about what the nature of this new war that we are in, and the nature of the enemy, and you kept hearing things like Islam is a religion of peace. Your reaction to that phrase?

Datz: I think it's anything but. Anything but. I've done a lot of reading on this. I've heard people talk about it. There is nothing in the Quran that talks about peace as being... It's a religion of submission. Islam means submission; it doesn't mean peace. There is peace in the Islamic world when the nonbelievers submit to Islam. Now, when you're an Islamic community in a minority, you go along with the prevailing society, but once Islam is the majority, that's the majority, and there's no tolerance of Jews, and there's no tolerance of Christians, and you will live in peace so long as you submit. The times when Jews have lived under Islamic rule, it's because they were dhimmis. They were treated with dhimmi status, which is second-class citizenship—d-h-i-m-m-i, dhimmi. There is vile stuff in the Quran about Jews, that we're the sons of monkeys and pigs. I mean, there is hideous things. If one says this, it doesn't mean one hates Muslims. It doesn't mean one denies any Muslims their right to live.

But I am not going to be hoodwinked into believing that it's something it isn't. It's a fundamentally very conservative religion, and you can say only 2 percent of Muslims are extreme, or fundamentalist. That's of a billion people. That's a lot of people. I'm sure there are moderate Muslims. I don't

know. It's not relevant, because what's relevant is the Muslims in power, in the Muslim countries, and how they live. I don't think any American or woman wants to live under Sharia Law in any Muslim country, so that's what it's about. So I am not criticizing Islam. I don't care. It's someone's religion. If you leave me alone, I'll leave you alone to practice your religion. It's when you don't leave me alone, and when you want to put me in a burka. That's not happening here, but it's happening in the Middle East. This is not an abstract concept. Women are stoned to death in Iran. Now they live in burkas. They live in oppression. Afghanistan, for God's sake, we saw what happened, because it's a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. It might be wrong. I don't know; I'm in no position to say. But Islam is a religion. I don't think any Islamists would say it's a religion of peace. That's America's way of making sure no one killed any Muslims.

We had a scholar come and talk about Islam, and he said it's so... Allah controls everything. So he took a pen and he dropped it, and he said, "What happened?" You said, "The pen fell. Gravity." "No, Allah willed it, that the pen fell. Everything that happens on Earth is because Allah willed it." There is no concept in Islam of the laws of nature. They only happen—gravity happens, the sun rises, the sun sets—because Allah wills it. Tomorrow the sun might not rise, if Allah decides not to. It's a very different mindset. Islam does not believe we are all made in the image of God. Americans think Islam says this, but it doesn't, because nobody can be in the image of the Allah. It's a fundamental difference between Judaism, Christianity, and the worldview of Islam.

Now, I don't care. This doesn't mean anything to me, until it starts to impinge on one's life and one's values and what goes on in the world. Then it matters, you know? When they're blowing up Buddhas in Afghanistan, or they're now doing in Timbuktu or wherever the hell they were blowing up other idols, it matters who has the gun and what they believe. It matters when the Wahabi sect of Islam, which is fundamentalist, appalling stuff, is exported by Saudi Arabia to keep their Islamists in line, and we're friends with Saudi Arabia. That's a problem. I'm not talking everyday Muslims. I don't care, you know. But when it comes to politics and what happens in Muslim countries, it matters. What's happening in Iran matters, very much so, for the safety of Israel, for the safety of the world, and for the safety of the region. This is no joke. These are fundamentalist Muslim clerics. But you know, if we can't talk about it, and everything we say about it is, "Oh, you're Islamophobic," it doesn't get us anywhere.

DePue: And you say what happens in Iran matters. You were referring to their attempt to develop nuclear weapons.

Datz: Their nuclear weapons, absolutely. Absolutely. What Israel's learned is you pay attention to what people say. Hitler said what he meant, and Arafat said what he meant in Arabic—but no one listens to what he said in Arabic—and

Ayatollahs, when they say Israel will be wiped off the face of the Earth, well, do we believe him? Do we not believe him? Can you afford to take a chance?

DePue: This is a nicely Jewish word, I think—has Israel served as a scapegoat for the Muslim world, then?

Datz: Oh, absolutely. Without a doubt. I think fundamentally their religion will not allow infidels on Arab land. I mean, that is a sore that they will never come to terms with. And it absolutely has. No one's looked at their societies. Nobody's cared. This obsession with the one democracy, and every country around them has been an oppressive regime that keeps its people in poverty and illiteracy and their women oppressed, but God forbid Israel. You've got on Gaza border an Islamist or terrorist organization, a proxy of Iran on their border, from which Israel withdrew unilaterally in the hope that they would take Gaza, run it, develop it, become a self-sufficient community that maybe one day they could trade with, and it's become a haven for terrorism and weapons and more rocket attacks. They do not accept the existence of Israel. It's in their charter that we will never accept the existence of Israel. How do you negotiate with it? You can't negotiate with a party that doesn't accept your right to exist. For them, until Israel is wiped into the sea, it's not acceptable, because it's an infidel. Damn right, it's a deflection.

DePue: Well, do you think then a couple years after 9/11, the United States, the Bush administration decides that we need to invade Iraq, we need to occupy Iraq, because of their threat of weapons of mass destruction?

Datz: You know, I think it was probably the wrong war. I think Iran was the real threat and not Iraq. I'm more sympathetic, because I think the intelligence was wrong. I think there may have been weapons of mass destruction. We certainly knew that he used them against his own people. I suspect many of them were moved to Syria. I think the day will come when we will find it there, because Syria suddenly had a nuclear thing that the Israelis just bombed a year or so ago. So the thing is still out on that one. People think it's all tied up and done in history; I don't think it is. It was a disaster once they got there, and all the rest. But I appreciated his seeing the evil that is there. People derided Bush for that, for simplicity, but I think there's real evil in in the world. And I thought after 9/11 the world would realize that there are certain things and not everything's equivalent, not everything's okay, and there's a line in the sand, but it very quickly...

DePue: Did going after the Taliban in Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan make more sense to you?

Datz: It made sense, and I think one was reading about the horrors of the Taliban. There was the more direct link to Al-Qaeda, obviously, and I thought the liberation of the people of Afghanistan was a noble thing, and the women, because the Taliban life was a horror and a nightmare. But, of course, it's

turned into a quagmire. This is Afghanistan, too. Yeah, I don't know. It seemed justified. It certainly did. Iraq, eh, not so much.

DePue: Okay, 2008, the United States has a lively election. A lot of it deals with what Bush had found in Iraq, and the difficulties, the tremendous difficulties of that war. But I wanted to ask you as a Jew who's been working and very passionate about the subject of Israel and its future, and strong feelings about the nature of the world struggle and the war on terror. Are we running close on time here?

Datz: Yeah. I've got about five, seven minutes.

DePue: Okay, I'll make this short, then.

Datz: Okay.

DePue: Your view of the campaign with President Barack Obama.

Datz: I appreciated that America was enamored with him, and they were ready for a change. They were tired of Bush. They were tired of the war. Americans don't like wars anymore. I mean, who does, but post-Vietnam is a whole different America. I was not a fan of Obama. To me, it had nothing to do with his color. I could care less if he's pink, brown, blue. I understand the historic nature of it, and I think it was very moving when he was elected, because I appreciated the historic nature of it. I view candidates for what they stand for, and I think there was very little known about him, but the press were in love with him, so they didn't do their due diligence, and they still don't. Who is this man? What does he really stand for? Who are his friends? Who are his compatriots? You know, we saw a little bit of that with Jeremiah Wright.

So much has been hidden and kept from us. Why? Transcripts this, thingie that. There was no delving in. I thought he was not experienced enough for the job. I think he was just a senator for too short a time, and he gave a good speech. Doesn't qualify you to be president. I very soon did not appreciate his foreign policy, this notion that America's not special, that we're just like everybody else. Deferring to the UN, I think, is the worst thing ever. The UN is the most corrupt organization. His whole worldview, I think, is wrong, and has weakened America.

DePue: How about his attempts to reach out to the Muslims communities?

Datz: I think it was a fine idea, but it turned out to be naïve in the extreme. His speech in Egypt was very revealing where he did not make any demands or criticism of them, equated Israel's existence with the Holocaust alone, and no historical basis for why Jews have a right to any land there. It was fundamentally wrong. He bent over backwards to the Muslim world in a way that was not appropriate, and kowtowed to them. But you see, he's driven by this notion of, "I can charm anybody", and if we just talk and you'll see how

nice I am. You know, it's crap. When you're talking about a region of the world particularly, who understand power and saw America receding, and that's not a healthy thing, and they've seen every opportunity. It's not just the Middle East. It's Russia. Obama turned on, reneged on agreements in Israel and in Russia, and sort of seemed to punish allies, and kowtow to enemies, which I think is a bad thing to do. And to North Korea and China, too. I think it's—

DePue: Two more questions.

Datz: See, and I don't know what you think about any of this. You're probably bristling in silence (unintelligible).

DePue: Well, it's not my job to reveal how I feel about this.

Datz: (laughter) We'll have to have a coffee sometime. Okay.

DePue: Two more questions here. What was the one question I just had in my mind, and...?

Datz: Oh, I'm sorry.

DePue: Why does the Jewish community in the United States, then, traditionally vote for Democrats, and voted for Barack Obama?

Datz: It's a good question. It's a good question, and it's a long answer, and I don't know that we have time. Traditionally, the Jews, they became Democrats after Roosevelt, which is a very strange thing, because they—

DePue: After...?

Datz: President Roosevelt. Because Roosevelt was not good for the Jews. He was lobbied during the war to bomb the train tracks to concentration. He refused to do it. He was not a lover of Jews. When they wanted to end the German rule in North Africa, when they were taken out, they imposed laws against the Jews, he wasn't in any hurry to remove them. But for some reason, the Jews think of him as a New Deal guy and they love him, and that started this trend towards supporting Democrats. Also, a lot of Jews, their religion has become liberalism. They think Judaism says you should be liberal, and that's become their religion, and they think that's what being—repairing the world, doing good means you're liberal. They tend to be more liberal than conservative because they've been victims of intolerance and that, so liberalism, by definition, has shifted. What I think—I consider myself a liberal in the classic sense of open markets, open ideas, freedoms of expressions and things. What it's come to mean is quite different in my view. It's become a far more leftist notion.

DePue: Your definition fits more into the nineteenth century of liberalism.

Datz: Exactly, and that's my view of liberalism, and that's what I would consider myself. Jews want to be socially liberal, and thing... But it's a good question, and it's changing slightly, and it's changing partly because of this President. But they were still overwhelmingly Democrat. I have non-Jewish friends who say to me, "Why do Jews keep voting for somebody, why do they support someone who's clearly not their friend?" I say, "You tell me."

DePue: Last question, and this is probably another very tough question for you, but how would you identify yourself today? South African? Jewish? American? A mixture?

Datz: I'll always be Jewish. I mean, it's part of who I am. I'm an African American. I'm both. I'm African and American.

DePue: But you like the irony of saying—

Datz: Yes.

DePue: —I'm African American.

Datz: I am. And it pisses people off, some people. They don't like it at all. But I'm both. I still feel African. I feel American now. Jewish is who I am. Wherever I've been, that's been a constant, you know what I mean? I was a South African who was Jewish, and I'm an American who is Jewish. It's just—it's who you are. I don't know if Protestants or Catholics or Muslims—maybe Muslims feel the same way, too, that they are American or they are whatever, but they're also Muslim, and it makes that something slightly different. I don't know if Christians feel that way, because the prevailing majority are Christian. You're always part of a majority, and we're a minority, and that's something I'll always be. I'll always be a minority. In South Africa, I was a minority of a minority. And here, I'm a minority of religions. You know, so it's just who I am. I've always been a minority, a slight other, never quite fit in with the mainstream ever, because just I'm a minority.

DePue: Would you be proud to call yourself an American?

Datz: Oh, sure, absolutely.

DePue: If Michael got a call to go back to South Africa or another country, what would you miss about the United States?

Datz: The sales. (laughter) The shopping and the sales. I'm telling you, it's going to keep me here. You know, sometimes you don't know what you'll miss until you're not there, you know?

DePue: Well, how would you like to conclude our interview, then?

Datz: Oh my, I don't know. I'm flattered that you felt my story was worth listening to and hearing. It's funny, because I never see myself in that role. I don't see myself as having an exceptional story, and when one thinks of immigrants, you think of really, you know, boat people, or... But I guess I'm an immigrant. I'm lucky I didn't come on a boat in really bad circumstances, and I chose to leave as opposed to being forced to leave. I'm appreciative of this country, and all its problems and flaws. It's still a great, great place. There's nowhere on Earth like it, truly. I think it is a beacon, and I think it needs to assert itself as such again. I'm pleased to be here. You know, that's it, I think.

DePue: Well, thank you. We're glad to have you here.

Datz: Thank you very much.

(end of interview)